Slings and stones for birds

Recognize the problem
Birds cause serious damage to rice and many other crops, especially near harvest.

Background
Birds are clever, so it is difficult to scare them. Birds soon lose their fear of scarecrows and other tricks. Although farmers have thrown stones at birds for many years, the birds are still frightened of stones.

Management
Scare birds with a sling, some stones, or balls of earth, while sitting on a raised platform. You will need some raffia or palm leaves, a cutlass, some sticks, ropes, and earth.

Peel the raffia or palm leaves to get the second layer which is the rope. Spin the raffia or palm on one leg and one hand to make a long rope about 20 feet long. Weave the rope in a basket form to hold the stone. Weave rope onto each side of the edge of the basket. The sling should be two feet long.

When there are no stones, use a ball of earth. Preferably use earth from an old termite hill, because it dries quicker. Dig the earth and mix with small water to make a ball of earth. You can make this ball of earth a month or so before bird scaring starts for proper drying in the sun. A ball of earth may be dried over fire for immediate use.

To make the platform:
Cut sticks and ropes according to size of platform you want. First dig four holes to bury the ends of four sturdy pillars, made from branch sticks (fak tik), of four of the same size. Tie four thick sticks to the corners of the pillars, to make a rectangle about four feet above the ground.

Smaller sticks laid across the platform floor should be tied with a strong rope to avoid sticks rolling. Part of the platform should be covered with thatch for shade.

A person stands on the platform to see from which direction the birds will come, then uses the sling and stone to repel the birds.

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Ghana, Sierra Leone

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