

## Women Transform Ghospur

Supaul District, Bihar

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Ghospur village is vulnerable to recurrent floods. There was no proper road or infrastructure and the community was living in difficult conditions. This village is far away from the nearest town, Birpur, and it was difficult to carry patients and pregnant women to take to hospital. There were about 100 households, dependent on agriculture. Over the last two years, changes in vision, attitude and leadership are visible and women are in the lead making this change.

Two years ago, SSP facilitated with Ghoghardiha Prakhanda Swarajya Vikas Sangh (GPSVS) to mobilise women groups in resilience building in Ghospur village. Kausalya Devi, Ganga Devi and Shanti Devi took the lead in learning how to organise and mobilise women members, need for conducting vulnerability mapping, attending training on disaster preparation and looking for sustainable livelihoods.



More than 30 women participated in the mapping exercise. The many problems identified in the mapping was lack of roads, anganwadi, raised hand pumps, strong houses, insufficient water for irrigation, unsafe drinking water leads to water borne diseases and increase health expenditure, lack of toilets, sand deposit in agriculture land, lack of ambulance service, lack of high land in

time for flood and loss in agriculture. As their understanding of their own risk and vulnerabilities improved, the SHGs called upon community leaders and elected ward members to join their members in discussing these problems and identifying solutions.

*"We got orientation and awareness from women leaders from other villages on how to work together to improve your village through mapping, identifying problems and solutions." (Ganga Devi)*

To solve these issues faced by the community, they formed Village Development Committee (VDC) which was facilitated by GPSVS, which comprised women leaders and elder leaders from the village including ward member. They prepared a community plan based on the priorities identified and submitted to the panchayat. Their demands included: a proper road connecting to the main road, raised hand pumps at community level that would ensure safety and no mixing with drainage and waste water as well as safe in flooding, toilets using government scheme, solar light, cleaning the area, polio vaccination, setting up grain bank, disaster task force, first aid facilities, safe high land

for rehabilitation in flooding, health sub centre, anganwadi, sand removal from agriculture field and boring well for irrigation.

*“If we won’t, then who will? Many people also compliment our determination and that we have been able to build a relationship with local government.” (Renuka Devi)*

They also held dialogue with Mukhiya of the Panchayat for need for resources and action for solving the issues in the village focus on infrastructure. The Mukhiya was cooperative and integrated the plan of Panchayat and submitted to Zilla Parishad. Zilla Parishad approved the plan with changes and released resources to the Panchayat. In the approved plan 60% of the Ghospur community demand was met and it was a success for the women group. This was happened due to regular meetings and dialogues with the Panchayat and block level officials etc.

Due to the leadership of the community the Ghospur village got 5 hand pumps thru worth for Rs. 2 lakh thru government scheme. The panchayat constructed a concrete road for 1.5 km that connects to the main road. Earlier, they were walking through the water to go to school, health centre and market. The panchayat also approved a call-up ambulance service. A health sub-centre was approved and has come up in the village. The existing anganwadi was repaired enabling 40 children to attend. 18 houses have been strengthened and raised the platform using Indira Awas Yojana. 28 toilets have been constructed using government schemes and more are planned. This is in a village where there was not a single toilet and open defecation was the norm.

*“Earlier we used to only worry about our own families, but through this initiative we know that we can do a lot for the community.” (Kausalya Devi)*

In these two years, women have shown leadership in addressing local risk and development and are respected for their work. 12 women leaders regularly visit offices from the panchayat to block level to negotiating for resources for local development and social security schemes and they are building a strong partnership with government offices and the panchayat. They have placed on the local government agenda issues identified in the mapping such as destruction of crops due to flood, irregular rain patterns, food and fodder scarcity.

- *Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP), July 2015*