

Malkoshkapur's Women Build Resilience

Supaul District, Bihar

The model village of Malkoshkapur, located in Supaul district near the Nepal border, regularly experiences flooding, even more frequent thanks to climate change. Sand deposits from the Kosi floods have destroyed the fertile land, soil and the environment, considerably reducing family income. Here, women leaders are paving the way for implementing sustainable and innovative ways to deal with floods and are motivating other communities to follow suit.

Prior to 2008, there were no Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in this area. After the floods that year, a Madhubani-based NGO, Ghoghardiha Prakhand Swarajya Vikas Sangh (GPSVS) entered this village and mobilised the women into SHGs in 2011. This cooperative effort brought significant change to their lives. They learned that they can mobilise around local risk linking with development.



"Whenever you do any good work in the village think about development"
(Ranjana Devi)

At a learning exchange between the Malkoshkapur SHG and women's groups in JagirAraji village, the women conducted vulnerability mapping in the village and identified priorities for action. Some risks identified were weather changes, flooding, poor infrastructure, sanitation, drinking water, health and livelihoods. The mapping and dialogue processes engaged ward members and community leaders as well.

The SHG decided to start collective vegetable farming on leased land. This is where SSP came in. The group received Rs. 15,000 from SSP's Community Resilience Fund (CRF).

"When we cultivated vegetables last year we got good profit of Rs. 4000. If we expand to more areas we can get much better profit." (Ranjana Devi)

The 11-member group bought three khatta land initially to start vegetables under the leadership of Lalita Devi. The first experiment was a success story and they got Rs. 4000 as profit. After motivated by the good result, the group took another five khatta on lease. This time, they cultivated maize and wheat which again provided a good profit. It was a success again and the group plans to cultivate paddy in this season.

"We contributed money and work in field together. We want to take our community forward." (Lalita Devi)

Following this success, the women of the Malkoshkapur SHG demanded community infrastructure and facilities. These women are active in Village Development Committee; they have even developed a community plan and submitted it to the Panchayat. Their main priorities were raised hand-pumps, strong houses, proper roads and drainage, toilet scheme and water for drinking and irrigation. The Panchayat included their plan in the Panchayat plan and submitted to Zilla Parishad and the community has so far got 6 hand-pumps, 12 toilets for houses and 32 houses with a raised platform and earthquake-resistant features.

*“Earlier we were not sitting in front of men. Now we are organized thru meetings and talking to Panchayat Mukhya for solutions. We will increase our strength in the coming months.”
(Lalita Devi)*



The Malkoshkapur SHG women are today recognised as leaders and change makers in this village. They visit the local Panchayat and block level offices to demand for new schemes and programmes, seeds and vermin beds etc. They have started attending meetings and workshops organised by civil society organisations. They learn and share their knowledge, thereby inspiring other neighbouring villages to develop safe communities in disaster and climate change situations.

“We need unity and strength in collective work. We also have to empower with information from meetings and learning visit.” (Lalita Devi)