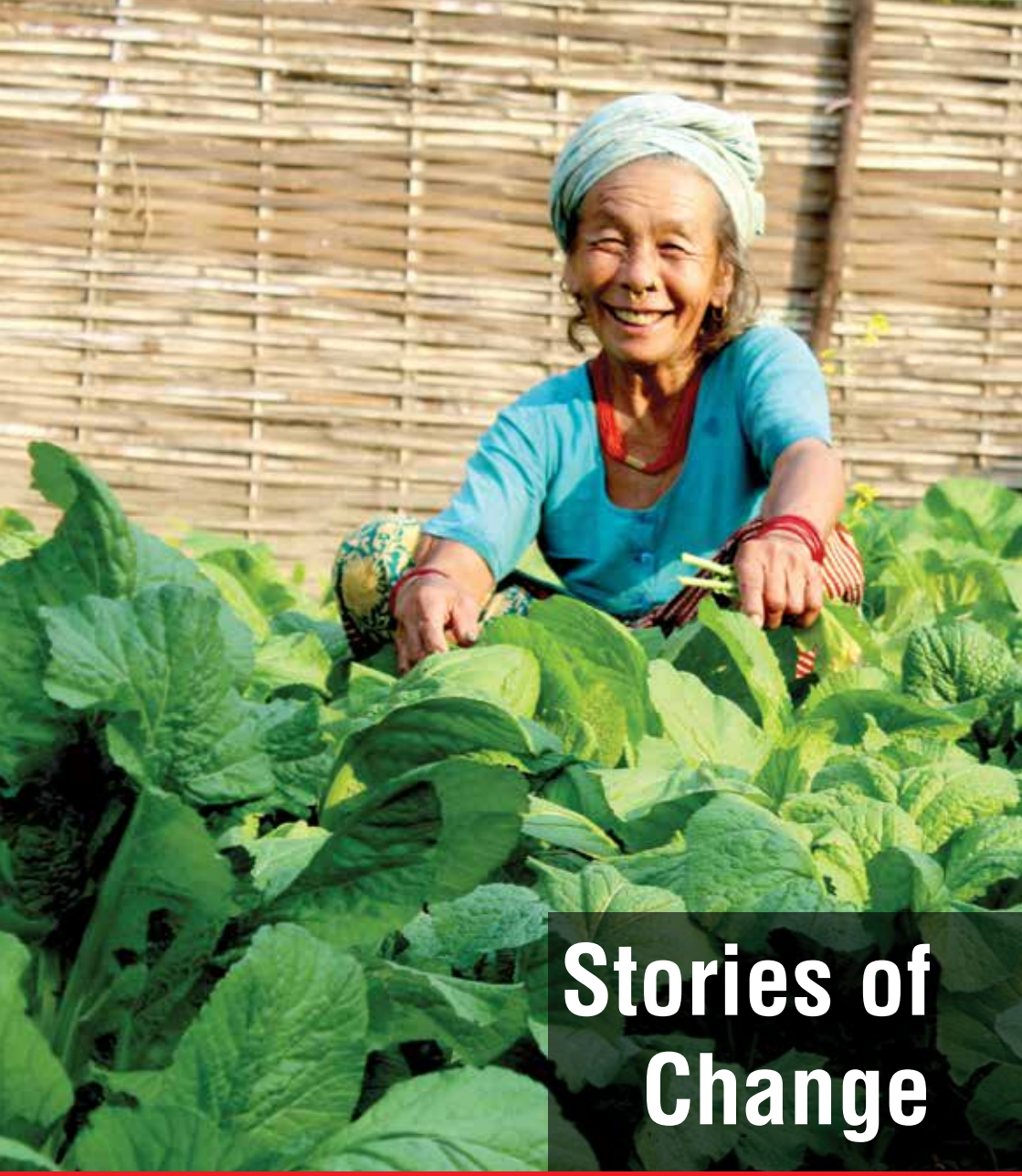

Stories of Change

Strengthening Community Resilience

April 2019

caritas Germany

CARITAS NEPAL

STORIES OF CHANGE

Strengthening Community Resilience
April 2019

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FOREWORD

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 provides a focus on Risk-Sensitive Development of communities. This is about mitigating disaster impacts and reducing underlying drivers of risk, building back better after a disaster, and strengthening community and environmental resilience. We are focusing our efforts on accompanying communities during their own journey towards resilience. We seek to work holistically at reducing vulnerability and exposure, working closely with communities to enhance their resilience through a wide range of initiatives that reduce disaster risk and increase community skills, assets and incomes and supporting local action that stabilize the ecosystem.

In 2009, Caritas Nepal started Disaster Risk Reduction programme in river system based approach in Ratu River of Mahottari and Dhanusha districts and introduced different structural, non-structural, poverty reduction activities including innovations on water conservationand agroforestry techniques to enhance the resilience of community. The project has been funded by Caritas Germany and implemented by Community Development & Advocacy Forum Nepal, Mahottari.

We are pleased to release the Enclosed Stories of Change: Strengthening Community Resilience. This compendium of stories of changes reflects a number of years' DRR work undertaken by Caritas Nepal and details examples of the positive changes brought as a result of the various initiatives undertaken for the targeted beneficiaries. On behalf of Caritas Nepal, I would like to thank the independent researcher/consultant Mr. Santosh Rasaili, the donor Caritas Germany, local and district level Government of Nepal, stakeholders; Caritas Nepal Disaster Management Department, the local partner Community Development & Advocacy Forum and nevertheless the communities themselves, who have helped to make this achievement possible.

Let's help vulnerable communities to be resilient.

Fr. Krishna Bahadur Bogati
Executive Director
Caritas Nepal

FOREWORD

Community Development & Advocacy Forum Nepal (CDAFN), Bardibas, Mahottari was established on 2006 A.D. For the last 10 year, CDAFN had been working in the thematic area of Chure watershed area conservation, climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction, earthquakes awareness, livelihood enhancement and community capacity strengthening in its command area (Mahottari, Dhanusha, Siraha and Sindhuli) in coordination with Government of Nepal, INGOs, NGOs, Civil Society, local stakeholders (Municipalities and Rural Municipalities) along with active public participation.

To minimize the effect of the climate change, organization had it regular effort in soil conservation, forest conservation, flood and landslide control and promotion of the greenery. The organization activities are especially focused in the Ratu watershed area (Mahottari and Dhanusha) where highly risked 16000 households are benefited. In addition to this, the effort of the organization had led to protect 35,000 hectare of agricultural land from desertification and under the vision of making river bed to fruit orchard, organization has planted fruit sapling in 650 hectare of reclaimed land. All these activities are focused to eliminated the poverty and develop resilience capacity of the people of project sites.

Since 2009, there is a strong and continue partnership between caritas and CDAFN. These organization had being funding in activities like rain water harvest pond, underground irrigation canal, drinking water source conservation, torrent and gullies treatment, bioengineering and livelihood enhancement activities through different project like “Building Resilience of Vulnerable Communities in Ratu Watershed through Strengthening Disaster Preparedness”, “Climate Change Adaptation Measures in Mahottari & Dhanusha” & “Strengthening Community Resilience in Mahottari and Dhanusha” with remarkable outcomes. In accordance, this book “Story of Change” consist of success stories and case stories of beneficiaries and villages benefited from the Caritas Germany and Caritas Nepal’s project activities.

We extend our sincere gratitude to Nepal Government, Caritas Germany, Caritas Nepal, LIBIRD and CFUG for the financial support. In addition to this, we would like to thanks drinking water and sanitation committee, underground irrigation canal user groups, ponds conservation user groups, community and civil society. We express our special appreciation to all the project staff and working committee of this organization who had devoted their hard work for the success of the project.

Thanks for the help and coordination.

Nagdev Yadav
President
Community Development & Advocacy Forum Nepal

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book entitled “Story of Change” is a delightful experience for me to pleat the knowledge of chure and inner terai region of Nepal. I acquainted myself with the geographical knowledge, their problems, tradition, culture, custom, religion of Mahottari and Dhanusha. I gather some experiences on the impact of climate change in rural livelihood and their coping strategies to the climate change. It was pleasing experience to see approaches of disaster risk reduction with activities like water harvest ponds, raising of seepage canal for drinking an irrigation purpose, bioengineering and river bank farming etc. I found very delighted beneficiaries and seems to have tangible change in their livelihood from the project activities. I would like to acknowledge Caritas Germany and Caritas Nepal for the opportunity to craft their effort by my words. In same way, my sincere gratitude goes around with local implementing partner CDAFN and its executive committee members. I would like to thanks project staffs who helped in my field visit. I would also express sincere thanks to all the characters of this books who provide information in a friendly environment. This was leaning rather than writing a book to me. Thanks to all helping hands.

Santosh Rasaily, Author

Water Miracle Village: Rajabas

Rajabas- a beautiful village in the laps of the Chure range along the corridor of Ratu River - is situated in Baridibas municipality, Mahottari. Flood and land slide during the rainy season and extreme drought during the dry season was an annual problem of the village. This village has now become a model for other villages of the Chure range with a bizarre example of water resources management. The success of the village is due to effective and efficient management of the watershed and capacity building of the people.

The past scenario is in complete contrast to the present prosperous Rajabas. This village used to face different natural calamities like flash flood, land cutting in rainy season and extreme drought in the dry season. Ratu River and Jarayo torrent were two major water bodies for Rajabas that used to have too much water in the rainy season and no water in the dry season creating limited options for livelihood. Due to the effect of the climate change on water, too much water and too less water had created a frightening picture leading to disaster.

Initially the village used to be in low land near the Ratu River. Prem Budathoki (Beneficiary) shares his experience, "We, the villagers, still remember the floods of 2002 & 2003 which had swept 2 hectare of land and forced us to shift the village to the uplands of Rajabas". In the uplands, people used to grow hardy crops like finger millet and maize whereas in lowland, people used to grow rain-fed paddy. People used to harvest just a single crop due to lack of proper irrigation facilities. The vegetable farming was just a matter of stupor due to the lack of water. Even drinking water was a matter of serious concern. Nar Bahadur Koirala (Beneficiary) recalls, "The agricultural produce was insufficient for us, we had to migrate to nearby city for alternative means of earning". The water related disaster had really aggravated the life of people.

But the devastating scenario of Rajabas continued no longer as Community Based Risk Reduction project was implemented. Under the project, water management model for the wise use of the available water resources. It basically works in three models for making water available for irrigation and drinking purposes. In the first model, construction of seepage underground canals was done (named: School canal, Sep canal and Bagar canal) which are enough for irrigating 130 hectares of land. The second model also raises seepage water for drinking purposes. In third model, rain water harvest pond was constructed by digging the Jarayo torrent. The pond has multi-utility of harvesting the rain water, controlling the flood and

recharging the ground water. The pond has capacity of holding 40 million litres of rain water which is used for irrigating the uplands during dry season. In order to reduce flood, landslide and sedimentation, spur and check dams were constructed along with bioengineering. Sita Budathoki (Beneficiary) shares a painful story about how it was a battle to find water for drinking but after the construction of Parsaidap drinking water scheme, there is no problem anymore for drinking water. Similarly, in lowlands, after the construction of the underground canals, villagers have sufficient amount of water for harvesting three crops in a single year.

After the approaches toward making water available, project activities were directed toward strengthening the capacity of community through different water-based livelihood options. The Project has supported in the group-based organic vegetable farming by providing necessary vegetable production training, IPM training and seasonal seed support. Ram Bhadaur Thapa (President of Jarayo Jhora pond) shares "It is a blissful moment for Rajabas people that after construction of pond, we are growing vegetables all round in this dry land which was thought to be never possible". Shanta Baral (Vice-President of Sayapatri Income Generation Group) says, "We are growing vegetable in upland by precise use of the harvested water through drip irrigation and sprinkle irrigation." People are selling vegetables and saving their incomes from vegetables in Sayapatri Income Generating Groups. Rajabas has now become a centre of educational visits for different colleges and organisations working in DRR and Climate changes issues. Project is planning to develop it as a DRR and Climate Adaptation field school.

The present Rajabas village is a happy and beautiful climate adaptive village. The disaster created from too much water and too less water has become a story of the past. Still, although the amount of rainfall is the same, water management system has changed resulting in the prosperity of the village. The effective community-based water management system has changed this water and food deficit village to a water and food sufficient village.

Quenching the Village's Thirst : Devi Bahadur Karki

Over forty years ago, landslides and food shortage in his native district of Rammechap forced Devi Bahadur Karki's family to migrate to the neighbouring Dhanusha. The chronic water crisis hunting the Bahunmara village, his home for the past decades, made him take things into his own hands. Support of the project enabled Karki to act towards quenching the village's thirst.

Devi Bahadur Karki (51) and his household of five had bitterly experienced the consequences of water shortages in Bahunmara. Despite their continuous efforts, their land did not produce enough crops to feed the family. A lack of proper irrigation facilities made it impossible to grow anything but rice, whose cultivation was still dependent on the mercy of the rain. Karki's family, like many people of Bahunmara, would go to sleep hungry and wake up hungry. As if the food scarcity was not enough, the village would experience a chronic deficit of drinking water, echoing the proceeding climate change. To the date, the villages pass on the dreadful stories of children being bitten by snakes on their way to fetch water; women fainting after tediously crossing kilometres in the scorching sun; people being diagnosed with diarrhoea, dysenteries or cholera as a result of contaminated water's consumption. When Devi experienced the death of his neighbour due to cholera, he said "enough."

Constructing the future

"I started getting involved in different activities aimed at helping people in need. This is how I became a leader of a group on sanitation and drinking water within the framework of the project," says Devi Bahadur Karki. With the support of the project, Devi took a lead in his community to develop a canal securing an underground flow of water and build tanks supplying drinking water.

Rolling up his sleeves, Devi also worked as a mason during the construction process that provided the village with a new canal built along the Ratu River, which irrigates 76 hectares of land. Thanks to the new intake linking Bahunmara with the Bohoree stream and two tanks built using ferro-cement technology, 123 households are now enjoying access to 50,000 litres of safe drinking water. Alongside him, 45 people benefited from cash-for-work activities, working hand in hand towards securing the communities' future.

The new canal revolutionised farming in the area. The farmers can now cultivate three crops interchangeably, completely cutting off their dependence on rain waters: "This also has a big economic impact. We used to buy

wheat and maize worth around NRs. 30,000 in a year, while now we just grow it in our own field," Karki explains enthusiastically.

The project supported him with a construction of an innovative water pond for irrigation purposes on his own land, creating further opportunities for vegetable farming. With proper training, set of tools and farming inputs, months later Devi also produced commercially, selling products worth NRs. 20,000 annually. The additional income allowed him to enlarge the pond over six times and start fish farming. "Quite recently, I have also started commercial oyster mushroom cultivation. It is pioneering in the region and this cultivation has low efforts with large outcomes. Only this year, I sold 60kg of mushrooms," he says with a smile.

The multiplier of good

"I have developed a systematic farming system and people from neighbouring villages just come to see it, that's it," Karki states humbly when asked whether he feels like a role model for his community. But his contribution goes way beyond knowledge-sharing.

Having reached a point of comfortable production, Karki distributes extra seedlings amongst his community members and encourages them to start vegetable farming on their own. He also dreams of extending the mushroom production to a large scale: "People are slowly interested in this farming technique and I hope they will follow."

Thanks to his efforts and determination, Bahunmara does not need to fear water scarcity anymore. Every house is equipped with a tap with running water. Following Devi's footsteps, more and more people have engaged in income-generating activities around farming and animal husbandry working together towards more sustainable future.

Paving Steps toward Disaster Free Future: Surya Bahadur Karki

Natural disasters forced Surya Bahadur Karki to start a new already two times. When nearly 20 years ago severe landslides destroyed 2.5 hectares of his farmland, he saved up money working as a mason and purchased a small amount of land in Khadkule village to restore his farming activities. The floods and landslides disturbing the area in 2003 forced him to leave all his property behind and seek a new life in Rajabas. But the new beginnings were far from rosy. Water scarcity and general hostility of the new social environment put Surya in a more difficult position than ever before.

"Back in time, my reality in Rajabas was harsh. As the land would constantly get stricken by droughts, there was no way to cultivate vegetables. The only crops we had back then was millet. It was really difficult to survive," recalls Karki (49), a father of two. Project focused on strengthening the local communities' resilience opened a window of opportunity for Surya and people facing similar livelihood conditions. Within the framework of "cash for work" activities, they got a chance to construct new infrastructure for the common good, but also earn significant income that gave a new impetus to their own households.

Constructing the future

Working hand in hand with his fellow community members, Surya Bahadur Karki contributed to the construction of new water harvesting ponds, drinking waters tanks, undergrounds canals and check dams. The programme also provided him with additional trainings on the construction of water related structures and earthquake-resistant buildings. The cash injection coming from daily wages was life-changing and allowed Surya to save money for the purchase of a new piece of land.

The 0.6 hectare of land purchased by Surya was a low-value piece along the river side, deemed useless by the locals due to the frequent flooding of the area. Project made every effort to turn what was considered a wasteland into fertile soil, promoting riverbed farming activities and constructing gabion walls to further protect the area. "Thanks to the embankment, I am not going to lose my land again," Karki says and mentions that he can now grow three types of crops – rice, wheat and millet – as the underground irrigation canal and a water harvesting pond, constructed in the first stage of the project, supply enough water to feed his fields.

To encourage vegetable cultivation, project equipped the farmers with a set of new tools and farming inputs, opening a new farming chapter in the area. “I grow cauliflower, cabbage, cucumber, bottle guard, tomato, mushroom, radish, chilli, just to name a few,” enlists Karki. Having succeeded in his own production, he distributes extra vegetable seedlings amongst other villagers and encourages them to start as well, sharing knowledge and experience. “I was forced to buy vegetables, now I am a producer myself,” he states proudly. “It brings me profit of NRs. 25-30 thousand annually. I am a member of the local Sayaptri Income Generating Group, where I can save my money. Lately, my savings allowed me to purchase an additional 0.16 hectare of land.”

I had a dream

In Surya’s case, economic growth goes hand in hand with social empowerment. From a distrusted newcomer, he has grown to become an esteemed member of the local society: he coordinates the maintenance of the irrigation channels and solar batteries powering the water pumps; is an active member of different community management groups, as well as a valued mason – having received an additional training on the construction of earthquake-resistant houses, Karki has now gained fame as a specialist in the field. As everybody values his expertise, leadership skills and commitment, people from nearby villages call for him to settle any arising disputes.

Surya says he feels that we all have a moral obligation to work towards a better tomorrow for our own societies and is determined to remain active in his community. He plans to further expand his agriculture production to turn it into an even more profitable business. When asked about his biggest dream, he answers without hesitation: “I have built many earthquake-resistant houses. Now I want to build one for my own family.”

Diversity of Vegetables Ensuring Family Income & Nutrition : Ratna Maya Majhi

It is needless to say that the effect of climate change had not spared any one through the chronic drought during dry season. Among the victim, Patu village is one of them and is consider as one of the most desiccated village in Bardibas municipality. Patu village is situated in the uplands having no chance of irrigation resulting in impossible circumstances of farming. In Patu, there is habitation of the Majhi (Janajati) group who are considering as socially discriminated community. Ratna Maya Majhi has finds a way to adapt with this drought and ensure the farming activities.

Among them, 53 years old Ratna Maya Majhi of Kakarbitta tole, Patu has set an example of adapting with drought. She is living happily with her husband, son, and daughter-in-law and a grandchild. She only owns 0.6 hectare of upland without proper irrigation facilities. Her son and husband work as carpenters which is their main source of livelihood. She had gone through the severe problem of crisis. Due to lack of irrigation facilities, the land was left barren. Incomes from her husband and son were not sufficient for them to run their livelihood smoothly as most of it was invested in buying vegetables.

She was able to convert her barren desiccating land into productive greenery land when she became a member of the Kakarbhitta Income Generating Farmer's Group formed by project. After becoming a member, she came to know about climate change and different techniques to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change.

Among the techniques, she adopted collection of grey water in plastic ponds. The water used for washing dishes and clothes gets collected in the ponds which is later then used for irrigation purposes. In addition to this, she also received vegetable farming training, IPM training, drum for the bio-pesticide preparation and plastic tunnel for nursery and different kinds of vegetables seeds from the project. After this she had converted barren land into a beautiful home garden full of diverse vegetables incorporating IPM technologies. She joyfully says "I use local plants like banmara, ashuro, tite pati, khirro, sayaptri, bhojo , timur, cow urine, cow dung for the development of the botanical pesticide and botanical pesticides are effective in controlling pest and also add manure in the soil".

Ratna Maya Majhi says, "If males from houses go for earning, we used to eat vegetables. Otherwise, we had to eat only rice and pulses. But now we consume diverse vegetables every day". She also added that

after consuming vegetables, she had got rid of dizziness and weakness. She finds diverse vegetables as source to nourish her family. She said delightfully, "We used to invest about NRs.3,000 to 4,000 per month for vegetables but now we sell vegetables about NRs. 5,000 to 8,000 in a season. This project has set a new path for us and the continuous follow up with advice is the most fascinating part of this project".

Ratna Maya Majhi is just a representative of Kakarbhitta tole. Now many female members from the group are engaged in organic vegetable farming. In the past, females from Majhi caste used to be engaged in local alcohol preparation but now they are engaged in farming. This caste used to be ridiculed as drunkard group but now they have become inspiration for nearby villages through vegetable farming. Like Ratna Maya, many females from the groups save earnings from vegetables in their saving and credit groups. She gleefully shares, "We used to be exploited by the money lenders with high interest rates but now, we get loans at nominal interest rates from the group. The saving activity was very helpful for her as she took NRs. 20,000 during the delivery of the baby of her daughter-in-law. Everyone has realised that saving is indispensible to fulfill future needs. She shows direction for all the members in the meetings and settles the disputes that arise in the meeting through concrete solutions. Her husband, Ram Kumar Majhi, feels proud to introduce himself as the spouse of Ratna Maya Majhi.

"I have never thought of farming in my dry land but I got success in producing diverse nutritive vegetables through collection of grey water" says Ratna Maya Majhi with a smile.

Triumphant Search of Prestigious Life in Society: Bishnu Maya Pariyar

Bishnu Maya Pariyar was living a dejected life due to poverty and exploitation rooting from the taboos of untouchability deeply engraved in the society. She has found a new way of acquiring prestige in her life through active participation in activities conducted by the project.

Bishnu Maya Pariyar, (52) is living a pleasant life in Rajabas village, Mahottari with her 2 sons, daughters-in-law, 6 grandchildren and a husband. The main occupation for livelihood is agriculture (0.39 hectare) and sewing clothes. It was hard for them to survive from both occupations. Based on the amount of rainfall, they used to grow maize and finger millet in the uplands and rice in the low lands. Due to lack of the irrigation facility, replenishment of harvest from the available land was not sufficient. Being Dalit was another social problem for them as they used to be exploited by the villagers. The biasness was so extreme that it created feeling as if they were not a part of the society. Lack of drinking water, lack of irrigation and lack of good income, and social biasness had busted their lives.

Being poor and from a marginalized group, Bishnu Maya Pariyar got a chance to be a member of the Sayapatri income generating farmer's Group formed by project. After engaging in the group, she acquired a lot of benefits that turned her life to abundance. She received vegetable farming training, mushroom training, irrigation pipe, sprayer, IPM tools, and different kinds of seeds of vegetables.

Step Up in Farming

Bishnu Maya has established herself as an active vegetable growing farmer. She has a plastic pond of dimensions 4*5*1 m3 and uses the water from the pond for vegetable farming. The plastic pond has become oasis for her as it is helping her in the irrigation of land in the uplands and having good replenish of vegetable. After the construction of underground canal by project, low land which used to have only one crop harvested, now provide harvest of paddy, wheat and potato which is now sufficient for her family. She even had started mushroom farming after receiving the training. She said, "We used to consume luscious vegetables only in occasions but now, we have a variety of vegetables daily". She added, "In Rajabas, we used to batter vegetable with maize and finger millet at a ratio of 1: 3 from merchants but now we produce our vegetables ourselves". She also added, "We have not seen such type of merchants nowadays as our village is self-sufficient in vegetables".

Change in Perception

"We always had a wish to be treated equally in society. Beyond farming, this project has given a platform of sitting together and eating together which has abolished the system of biasness towards Dalits", Pariyar says. "People who did not eat the food after being touched by us, now buy vegetables from us!", she added. She now finds her dignity and value in the society and proudly says, "We are also part of this society". She used to get afraid of speaking with people in the village but now she confidently presents her ideas during meetings.

Strong Family Relation

"In the initial days, my husband Dal Bahadur Pariyar used to rebuke when I was out of the house for group meetings but nowadays instead of rebuking, he is eager to know what I learn from these meetings", she states enthusiastically. This year, she earned NRs. 10,000 from selling vegetables and mushroom. She used the income in the education of her grandchildren which has helped to develop a good relation with her daughter-in-law. Her husband is helping her in every endeavor. Her husband is happy that she is helping in generating income which has enabled the couple to run the household activities smoothly.

Bishnu Maya Pariyar, is now an active member of the Sayapatri Income Generating Farmer's Group and gets involved in the community's meetings and presents her ideas confidently. She has developed herself as a role model in her community. She has shown that a woman can also earn and become bread-winner for a family. Despite facing different kinds of discrimination, her hard work has resulted in triumphant search for a prestigious life in society. "I will be working actively in social activities as I am also a member of this society", she says proudly with a smile.

Easy way of Income Generation: Mushroom Cultivation

Oyster Mushroom (Plurotus oystrus) is an edible macro fungus of commercial importance and its cultivation has emerged as a promising agro-based land-independent enterprise. Mushroom has considerable importance in the human diet as they are rich in protein, non-starchy carbohydrates, dietary fiber, minerals, and vitamin-B with zero cholesterol and fat. Mushroom farming is especially suitable for low land holding and poor farmers as its can be cultivated with small investment. It requires a small place and provides returns in a small period of time. Project has disseminate this technology to generate income to its beneficiaries.

Considering the immense benefits of mushroom, project introduced mushroom farming. This intervention was implemented in 11 groups of 10 villages. Initially, training on cultivation practice of mushroom was provided to group members. During the training, they were also made aware about differentiating poisonous mushrooms from edible ones and about the nutritional importance of mushroom. With the objective of piloting this intervention, in the first year, every member was supported for 3 packets for mushroom substratum. After the harvest, they realized mushroom cultivation can be a good means of generating income at the household level from little investment. In the next year, some of the group members have decided for commercial cultivation of mushroom.

Rama Majhi inhabitant of Patu shares enthusiastically, "After successful trial of mushroom cultivation, I was very much eager for the commercial cultivation". In first year, from three packets of straw, she successfully produced 8.5 kg of mushroom. The taste and its nutritive value fascinated her. "I will continue mushroom cultivation as it allows me to work and take care of the house easily. The knowledge and techniques I have gained so far will allow me to extend the production to earn more money. All vegetable farming is good, but seems that mushrooms are the best for my life", she shares her plan.

Similarly, Maina Kumari Moktan from Dudhpani says, "I only knew about the wild mushrooms. Our grandfather died due to the consumption of poisonous mushroom. After the incident we had not consumed any mushroom". After the training organized by project, she can distinguish between poisonous and edible mushrooms. In the first year, she had prepared 3 packets of straw and harvested about 9 kg of mushroom. She shares "During harvesting time, we consumed mushroom almost every day. All

of us, including children, like the taste of it." She has decided for commercial cultivation of mushroom. Now she has prepared 15 packets of straw of mushroom cultivation. She has even prepared poly house for that purpose. She is very much optimistic about this cultivation."

Anju Thapa Magar resident of Lota enthusiastically says- "We did not know that mushroom can be domestically cultivated. Due to poor economic condition of my house, I was searching for a way of income. When I successfully produced and sold mushroom of NRs. 2000 in the first year, I decided to go for commercial mushroom cultivation." This year, she has prepared 15 packets of straw for mushroom cultivation with the support of the organization. She says expectantly, "I will have a good earning with this cultivation and this income will play pivotal role for children's education".

Similarly, from the Madeshi Community, Punam Devi Yadav gracefully shares, "Mushroom was totally new commodity in our community. After receiving training, I had made three packets through which I harvested about 9 kg of mushroom. I found it different but it had a good taste". She had also dried about 3 kg of mushroom and sent it to children studying in Kathmandu. They also love the taste of the mushroom. She says, "I will keep continuing with mushroom farming as it is effortless farming".

Mushroom cultivation is totally new for the project site's villages. It has brought a new hope for the villagers. In the future, it will disseminate among many females and will be a way of earning.

Riverbed Farming and Fruit Plantation Help to Retrieve Prosperity: Ram Narayan Singh

In 1977, the flood in Ratu River perverted Ram Narayan Singh from landlord to landless. Before the flood, Ram Narayan Singh (56), inhabitant of Parsa viallge , Bhangaha municipality, was living a prosperous life with farming activities in 2.6 ha of his cultivable land. He used to grow paddy, wheat and lentil and always had good harvest which was more than enough for his family. He used to sell surplus grains and earn about NRs. 1.5 lakhs annually. The flood had shown no mercy devastating his blooming life in no time. All his cultivable land was swept away depositing sand everywhere demolishing his hope of livelihood. The flood of Ratu had almost swept 67 hectare of lands affecting 80 households in village and Ram Narayan Singh is just a representative of the wreckage. Now with the support of project, along with other victims, Ram Narayan has a new light of hope of livelihood.

Struggle after flood

Ram Narayan Singh had gone through a harsh moment aftermath of the flood. "The flood swept entire crops and I had lost every iota of hope when I saw sand everywhere in my productive land", recalls Ram Naryan Singh sadly. "The most difficult moment for me was when I forcefully had to discontinue the education of my nephew", Singh says disparately. For livelihood, he even started going abroad as seasonal labor leaving his wife and nephew. He even took land on lease for farming but all his attempts were not enough for him to get out of this misery.

Adapting to the consequences of flood

"During the field study of the project team in our village, I got a chance to meet and share my bitter experience of flood", explains Ram Naryan. Under the activities of reclamation of land through riverbed farming and plantation, I got an opportunity to be a member of the Ratu River Fruit Plantation Income Generation Group formed by the Project", he says enthusiastically. "During the orientation when I heard about farming in sand (Riverbed farming), I could not believe it as it was totally new for me and despite our disbelief, we were ready for riverbed farming as we have no other alternatives", he added. After the completion of the training, he started cultivation of vegetables in the riverbed. In 1 hectare of sandy land, I grew bottle guard, pointed guard, pumpkin, radish, mustard, cucumber, sponge guard", enlisted Singh. "Now I don't have to buy vegetables; rather, I sell vegetables in nearby market and earn about NRs 50000 in a season", he added blissfully. Under the plantation activities,

he was supported with the provision of different saplings of fruits. “Now I have planted mango, litchi and lemon in about 1.5 hectare of lands. I even practice multistoried farming approaches for growing vegetables like pointed guard under the growing fruits trees”, he says. Plantation of fruits had dual benefit of reclamation of land and economic benefits from fruits. Now, there is about 102 hectares of land which have different fruits planted with the support of the Project. Now the land of Parsa village which used to be full of barren sand is now full of vegetables and fruits plants.

I have hope

“My riverbed farming is considered to be the best and many visitors from different organizations come here for a visit”, Singh shares proudly. I have good income from vegetables and in the near future, I will make more incomes from fruits” he added hopefully. He had bought 1 hectare of land from his savings. Ram Narayan becomes happy when people say “No flood can make him poor; after all, he is born to be rich”. He and his nephew could not study due to scarcity but he has a dream to make his grandchild an educated person of society. Along with Ram Narayan, all villagers have a hope that in the near future, this Parsa village will be a hub for mangos and litchi. Ram Narayan says humbly, “I remember my painful days created due to flood but the adaptation technologies have retrieved my good life” and gives thanks to CDAFN and Caritas”.

Empowered Communities with Empowered Women: Bhulu Devi Sada

Bhulu Devi Sada's story reflects a struggle that Dalit communities - known as "untouchables"- still face across Nepal and India. Subjected to humiliating customs and class prejudice, the Dalit still fail to get recognition as fully-fledged society members. "I would put on a veil to cover my face and walk around not daring to speak to the others," recalls the 27-year old. The omnipresent exclusion makes the minority particularly vulnerable in the context of natural hazards, making it virtually impossible to improve their livelihoods' income and security in the aftermath of a disaster.

Giving the voice to the voiceless

Project ensured the Dalit ownership of the project from the very beginning, becoming the very first initiative of a kind in the area and paving a way to a bigger societal change. "It was two years ago when CDAFN/Caritas first came," Bhulu recalls. "Back then, we were struggling with a lot of water problems. It was even difficult to find drinking water."

In Jamuniya village, the project drilled two wells and involved the community in a comprehensive sanitation programme, followed by training on livestock management: "We learnt how to maintain water facilities, farm goats and build goat sheds," specifies Sada. She admits that the WASH component had an immense impact on the local environment: "The village is now clean, the infrastructure is in place – my son can go to school easily without stepping into dirt everywhere."

Another pillar of the project focused on women empowerment. Apart from the provision of basic skills training such as reading and writing, it had foreseen an establishment of a female group where the women of Jamuniya could collectively save their money and also take micro-loans. Bhulu says that through the encouragement from the project team, she ran for the first ever president of the newly-formed group.

Bhulu says, "Every aspect of the project is best; however, women empowerment has changed our lives". She admits she had undergone a major transformation herself; like, it was the first time she had access to basic education: "I learnt how to write my name and read." As Jamuniya's Dalit community came together for the first time in its history, the women's initiative gained a major societal support; the local men were actually encouraging their wives to get out of the house and participate in the communal meetings.

Sada recalls her husband followed the common Nepali migratory road and went to Qatar, seeking work opportunities to support their agriculture based household. She was left alone taking care of her three children and a father-in-law. But this did not stop her from embracing the momentum and taking a step further. Ultimately, her middle name, Devi, means “courage”.

Not untouchable anymore

“After Project intervention the untouchability issues are no longer that persistent here. Before, the local upper caste would not allow us dine with or even speak to them. Now this is changing,” Bhulu says. The empowered community decided to speak up and elect their own representative for the local government. Bhulu Devi Sada’s name came up as a natural candidate as she had demonstrated her leadership skills heading the women’s group. Having won a seat in the local municipality council, she now participates in the meetings as the first ever woman from her community. “Before I couldn’t even write my name but the scenario has changed,” her face lightens up.

So far, Bhulu has managed to successfully push for crucial changes in the village, which now enjoys access to electricity. Currently, she is busy lobbying for a community shelter. As a woman from a discriminated ethnic group who has faced uncountable number of challenges, she wishes to make the future easier and brighter for her children. She becomes visibly sad when talking about her own lack of opportunities - a regret of not being able to go to school is a prevalent one. “I will make sure that my children, that our Dalit community has chances that I did not have,” she says, bringing up the example of a labour market, where many jobs still remain unavailable for “untouchables”.

“I hope to move ahead in a lot of things- for my daughter and my son,” Bhulu gets very serious. She asks us to remember that Dalit people are ready to act and challenge and quoted, “We are thirsty. If you give us water, we will drink.”

Goat Farming Paved Path of Daughters towards School: Ranjana Devi Mahara

In spite of having desire of acquiring education, Ranjana Devi Mahara could not attend school when she was young. She does not want her children to face the same situation; rather, she wants them to be educated and see them in good position in future. After being involved in the Income generation activities guided by project, it has helped her to afford education for her children.

Madesh (Terai belt) is considered as one of the undeveloped parts of Nepal. Lack of education and health services, prevailing social cultures, superstitions, taboos and social evils (like the dowry system, alcoholism, child marriage, discrimination based on caste) are the major hindrances for the development of the Madesh communities. In addition, Madeshi female's condition is aggravated by the domination by the males. In most of the places, females are still not allowed to go to school and rather treated as burden in the family. The common belief in the Madeshi community is that women are born to be housewives and serve in the kitchen. Ranjana Devi Mahara (35), a resident of the Bhanaga municipality, Mahottari, is a Dalit female from the Madesh society, had faced a similar situation during her childhood. She could not study but has a dream to educate her daughters through her own income which came true through the support of Project.

Ranajan says sadly "I did not get the opportunity to study due to poverty and social culture of the Madesh society". She had to marry in her early age and take the responsibilities of the kitchen. They did not even have a single piece of land for farming. Her husband used to go abroad (India) as labor for the purpose of earning. Most of the income was spent on buying food. "Due to the lack of family planning education, I gave birth at a young age and now, am a mother of 5 children" Ranjana describes with dejection. Big size of family and poverty was creating a situation of hand-to-mouth problem. "I was always pondering about a way of income to finance my children's education", she added.

"The project was forming a group for the goat farming. I got a chance to be the Chairperson of the Ratu Goat Farming Group", says Ranjana Devi enthusiastically. Initially, she was provided with the basic technologies of goat farming. "After the training, I was happy to receive a doe (female goat) and a breeding buck (male goat) provided by the project", says Ranjana with a smile. In continuation, group members were provided with the training of mineral block preparation. She shares that the feeding of the mineral block helped her goats to grow fast. "My happiness rose to an ecstatic level when the doe give birth to 3 kids!", she explained. "I was also awarded with financial

support for construction of modern shed for goat. The modern shed facilitates me in feeding and in the collection of goat waste ", she added. After the birth of the baby kids, the organization supports vaccination of PPR, de-worming, and cure of endo and ecto-parasites. After 6 months, she sold all three goats and received NRs 20,000 which was the first income of her life. Annually, on an average, she sells about 5 to 6 goats, and makes an income of about NRs 50,000. Her husband "Ram Baros Mahara" was very much reluctant about her involvement in the group initially. However, he now supports Ranjana's activities. She also sells the goat manure and earns about NRs. 12,000 in a year.

Change in the perception

The group has a regular meeting once a month where they discuss about different problems and new ideas of income generation. Ranjana Devi leads the group meeting and often discusses issues related to women empowerment. Most of the female members are involved in goat farming and vegetable farming and are supporting their families financially. Now in Ranjana's society, a change in the male perception regarding women can be felt. Now, female are also equally involved in social discussions and are asked for their suggestions.

Education for daughter

Ranjana could not study but she had a dream to educate all her children but it was very hard for her in the earlier days. " Due to poverty, my elder son has to go abroad for earning whereas my elder daughter had to marry and there were no other options for them", she said with a gloomy face. She was upset with this condition as she wanted all her kids to be educated. "After goat farming, I am saving income to finance the study of my 3 children. Now my son and 2 daughters go to school. I get choked remembering about the discrimination that I faced during my childhood days but seeing my daughter going to school, I forget about all those sorrows", she describes. She is planning for commercial goat farming and says "my prime objective of goat farming is to build a bright future for my daughter through education".

Commercial Vegetable Farming Ensue Way of Living: Suresh Chaudary

Five years ago, Nepalese youth "Suresh Chaudary" resident of Bhangha ward no.6, Sangrampur had gone to Malaysia by investing 2 lakhs but had to return due to tremendous work load with low income. After returning back to Nepal, he had no option of making a living and was going through a financial crisis. He faced great challenges to provide his kids (3) with food, clothes and education. After the commercial vegetable farming under the guidance of the project, Suresh Chaudary is now living a prosperous and joyful life.

Suresh Chaudary (31) says, "being uneducated and jobless, I decided to go Malaysia with a golden dream". "I was assigned with a very hard job with low wage which was in contrast to pre-described job by the agent" he further adds. It was also difficult for him to stay away from family and decided to return back within a year. "I do not want to remember those difficulty-ridden days and also do not suggest youth for migration" he shares with a gloomy face. However after the return, he had no source of income. He did not own land for cultivation and was suffering from economic crisis. Villagers used to gossip about his Malaysia job fiasco in a negative light. It was very painful for him to stay in the village being jobless.

Motivation for start

Suresh Chaudary was happy to know about the formation of the vegetable group by the project for the purpose of income generation. Suresh shares, "I was disappointed as people said I have no land for vegetable farming". After he told of his situation to the Community Motivators, they showed him a way of leasehold farming. "After this concept, I got a chance to join the Adarsha Income Generation Group" he said with ecstasy. Group's members were provided with vegetable training. After training, Chaudary rented 0.06 ha of land on lease and started farming cauliflower and cabbage. After the harvest, he earned NRs. 15,000 which motivated him to increase the quantity of leasehold farming. "I was very much fascinated with the regular field visit and field's problem based technical advice from Project", says Chaudary. "My wife Lal Pari Chaurai also helped me in vegetable farming" he further adds.

Path to success

With regular motivation from the Project, he decided to go for large scale leasehold commercial vegetable farming. From 2nd year, he started vegetable farming in 2.3 hectare of land. From the harvest, he sold vegetables of

NRs. 1 million with a profit of 0.6 millions. His joy had no limit. “I regret wasting my valuable productive year in Malaysia. We can even have good income in our own land!”, he describes. Now from the income from the vegetable farming, he has bought 0.3 ha of land for vegetable farming. “I do not want to remember my days in Malaysia, it was terrifying”, Chaudary states with grievance. He also teaches and shares the techniques of vegetable farming with his neighbours. At present, he is busy in supplying vegetables in different markets like Loharpatti, Rauja, Ramgopalpur, Aurahi, Janakpur, Bardibas and Jaleshwor. He has found his concrete way for survival.

My dream

“I could not continue my study due to poverty but I will educate all of my 3children. I do not want them to go abroad for earning; rather, I want to see them as doctors serving in our own village”, Suresh describes his beautiful dream. He is saving his income for the children’s education.

Next, he has a plan to be involved in off-season vegetable farming as he described off-season has more market value. He insists youth should work in their own country instead of going aboard. Due to emigration of energetic young people, Nepal is facing labor shortage and agriculture depends upon female and old people; so, youth should be engaged in agriculture and make it productive” he describes with a gloomy face. “Being a son of a farmer, I am doing my duty. I am producing food for the people”, he speaks with pride.

Building Flood Resilient Village through Bioengineering: Kalapani

Kalapani village (Bardibas municipality ward no.3) lies in the northern part of Mahottari district. It has dense forest in its Western part and Ratu river flows from the South to North. Bahune, Prewinge and Padehri are three major flash flood prone torrents which had made life of the local people miserable for ages. Due to these torrents, the village was highly vulnerable to flood, land cutting and sedimentation. With bioengineering approaches adopted with the support of the project, these torrents are now well settled creating a condition of relief for the villagers of Kalapani.

Kalapani is a diverse village that has a mix of different castes of 225 households. It is a naturally beautiful village settled in 19540 AD in the midst of a forest and Ratu River with many torrents flowing in between. Because of climate change, the village experiences heavy rain annually during the rainy season. In the previous days, the village used to have bitter experiences of flash flood in torrents along with lands cuttings, and sedimentation of debris. The flood also affected agricultural land creating food deficiency.

Bitter Experience

People of Kalapani still remember the colossal flood of 2004 AD. There were floods in all 3 major torrents as well as in Ratu River. The flood devastated huge amount of villagers' properties. The flood swept away about 27 hectare of agriculture lands including one house and twenty houses were drowned. Juna Khadka shares, "The flood was so terrifying that we could not sleep for a week. Along with 0.16 hectare of our land, all food stocks were swept away. We survived by eating Githa and Vakur (wild crops)", she adds with a painful voice.

The only school in village "Shree Rastriya Saraswoti Madyamik School" is situated beneath the Padheri torrent. Ten years ago, the annual flood in the torrent had invaded the land of the school. The flood cuts the lands of the school every year, making it highly vulnerable for landslide risks. "The flood of 2010 was massive and we were scared that the school will be swept away by the flood. Luckily, the school survived. We even had to close school for a week which hampered the study of our students", shares Sani Bhandari (Principal) bitterly.

Construction phase

After the project launched in Kalapani village, people are optimistic of being resilient to flood problems. The project started with making the village free of open grazing and the local people agreed with the concept and started stall feeding their cattle. In addition, the project implemented the approaches of bioengineering in which it constructed 17 check dams at

the Bahune torrent. In Perwinge, it constructed Runoff water Harvest dam and 12 check dams in Padheri Kholsi. In addition to these structures, the project encouraged the local people to cultivate Bamboos, Napier, Broom grass, Stylo and Vetiver in groups. Now the bamboos and other grasses work as natural check dam to slow down the flow of water current. This bioengineering also helps to check the flow of debris towards downstream. Now there is clean water flowing through the torrent which indicates that the torrents are now almost settled. Additionally, the project has also constructed a 2.5 meter underground canal which now irrigates 71 hectare of lands.

Happiness around village

Now the appearance of the whole village has changed. We can see dense greenery everywhere. Deforestation and open grazing are totally controlled. People have not experienced massive floods even during the rainy season. The school is also protected against landslide and flood. People have enough water for irrigation during the dry season too. Pampha Karki shares, “My house is located just beneath the Bhanune torrent but I don’t have any anxiety of flood as the torrents are controlled due to the construction of the check dam along with bioengineering measures. The flood had swept 0.16 hectare of land but it has now been retrieved through bioengineering and we are farming in the same land again”. “The concept of bioengineering has also helped animal husbandry as we can now find enough forage and fodder near the roadside” shares Dil Maya Waiba with a smile.

The nightmare of flood and landslide has vanished after the implementation of bioengineering approach. Bioengineering is a cheap and effective way to control the flood and landslide. The story of Kalapani village can be a lesson for many villages around the Chure region.

Ganesh Basnet (Ward Member) shares enthusiastically, “Now the village is almost completely resilient to flood with settled torrents, the threat of landslide and flood is no more. We are going to develop picnic spots in the village. Thanks to marvelous works of the project”.

Rising with Rice: Drought Tolerant Rice "Sukkha- 3"

Nepal is an agricultural country with 80% of its population dependent on agriculture. Rice has its own economical and socio-cultural importance in the Nepalese society. Rice contributes about 50% of total food grains. The negative effect of climate change such as drought, erratic rain fall, high temperature, and change in weather pattern are resulting in decreased areas for the cultivation and production of rice. In the project area, dissemination of the drought tolerant rice "Sukkha-3" has brought reform in paddy cultivation.

Due to erratic rainfall and severe drought, if a farmer left his/her cultivation, food security would be unimaginable. Considering the drought problem in rice cultivation, in 2011, the National Rice Research Program (NRRP), Hardinath released drought tolerant rice variety named "Sukkha -3". The Coordinator of NRRP, Hardinath, Dr. Ram Baran Yadaw states that "Sukkha-3 can be cultivated in drought prone (upland- rain-fed) area up to altitudes of 700 meter above sea level". He adds further, "It has the capacity to tolerate drought and is resistant to diseases like blast and bacterial leaf blight". This variety has created a miraculous reform in the rain-fed rice farming. With the objective of dissemination of the climate smart paddy "Sukkha-3", the project had distributed the foundation seed as Information, Research & Development (IRD) kits in the project sites. 600 kg of IRD was distributed in 119 HHS in drought prone villages (Rajabsh, Lota, Dudhbani, Bisambar, Patu, Chure and Kalapani) of project sites. Initially, they were amazed to know about the rice that can be grown in the drought condition. After harvest, they were even happier to see good yield. This paddy has brought new hope for the people living in the areas severely affected by drought.

Anita Karki from Rajabas shares, "We used to grow Sabitri (rice variety) which yielded 6 muri (330kg) in 3 kattha (0.1 ha) of land. This variety needs 3 times irrigation for a good yield". After she received 4 kg of Sukkha-3 rice from the organization, she planted with hope. Only on the basis of rain water, without extra irrigation, this paddy gives a good harvest. In 3 kattha (0.1 ha) we got 11 muri (605 kg) of rice which was one of the bumper harvesting seasons for them. Seed to Seed training also helped her to select promising panicle and she harvested them separately for seed for the next year as well. "My neighbors also liked this variety and I even distributed about 55 kg seed to them", she adds.

Bisambar is one of the drought affected villages of Mithila municipality, Dhanusha. Tak Maya Maghi from Bisambar shares, "We used to grow Taichun (rice variety) and it needed 2 times of

irrigation which added costs for production". After receiving 4 kg of Sukhha-3 rice, she planted in 2 kattha (0.06 ha) as per the technical guidelines of project. She had 5 muri (275 kg) of harvest whereas with Taichun, she used to have about 3 muri (165kg) of harvest in the same land. She describes, "The rice is fine and has long grain and also has a better taste than Taichun". "It is liked by old people and also children due to it softer texture", she explains further. By seeing the plant structure of this rice, her neighbor asked her to preserve the seed for them in for plantation in the next season. She sold about 45 kg and earned about NRs. 2,500.

Biru Rana from Kalapani village shares, "Our regular paddy used to be infested by bugs (insects) and diseases due to the drought condition. I was very excited to know about the drought tolerant rice-Sukkha-3". He experienced less infestation of insects and diseases as compared to their regular rice variety. He further adds, "The straw are regular and long which is useful for mattress too".

Most of the farmers who had received IRD of Sukkha-3 have saved the seeds for the coming year. Seed to Seed training throughout the project sites has helped farmers to select the best panicle from the field for the seed purpose. Sita BK from Bisambar shares, "We used to grow Ramdhan (rice variety) which produced about 3 muri (165 kg) in 2 kattha (0.06 ha) whereas Shukkha -3 produces 330 kg". I am very thankful to the organisation; they introduced us to the awaited variety and they also provided us with seed to seed training which has been very beneficial for us", she adds further.

"Sukhha-3"- a climate smart variety of rice with the capacity to tolerate drought has become a new hope for the people living in drought affected areas. It has been a miraculous variety as it gives good harvest in drought conditions as well. The people are well informed about this variety and have preserved the seed for the next season. This seed is also being shared from one farmer to another through informal seed sharing system. Seed to Seed training has also played an important role to preserve the seed for next season. Hope this variety will expand in large area through farmer to farmer seed exchange system.

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Strengthening Community Resilience