

Building skills, changing perceptions and practices through taking challenge for more judicious use of available resources



Sardamdaag is a completely tribal village and situated in about 18 Km away from block headquarter *Manika* of *Latehar* district. Like other villages in *Latehar*, *Sardamdaag* could also be characterized by poor road connectivity, poor accessibility of quality health services. Basic infrastructure required for living a dignified life is almost nonexistent in the village. The menace of left wing insurgency (*Naxalite*) has further crippled the normal life and have also created serious deterrent in development activities.

Agriculture and manual labour are the only option for earning their livelihood in the area, marginal farmers with less skill and in absence of improved agriculture practices/facilities end up with less production. The ultimate yield does not justify the amount of hard work, commitment and investment put by the poor farmer.

Rupni Devi is a 30 year old young tribal lady live in *Sardamdaag* with her husband, one daughter and one son. *Rupni Devi* and her husband are literate but she well understands the value of education so regularly sends her children to school in the nearby village. However she remained concerned about the higher education of her children because.

Rupni Devi's family is completely dependent on 1 acre of land for their agriculture; they mainly take one crop of paddy in the *Kharif* season. The production is hardly fulfills 3-5 months requirement of her family, sometime because of cash crunch, they have to sell some paddy which reduces their food grain stock and increases vulnerability.

Vocational Education and Training Programme (VET) is being implemented in the area by *Bihar Pradesh Yuva Parishad* (BPYP) and Centre for World Solidarity (CWS). VET is a skill development course designed for rural youths on agriculture and allied activities. *Rupni Devi* came to know about 10 days course of System of Rice Intensification (SRI) technique in the village meeting for sensitization organized by *Bihar Pradesh Yuva Parishad*. She learned in the training that with this technique she could increase the production 2-3 times with even less inputs with a little bit sincerity and disciplined approached.

She applied for the course and got selected for the 10 days training programme. She attended all 10 days and learned different practices for SRI paddy cultivation. She learned all steps very carefully from seed treatment to rising of seedling, from transplantation to weeding, from pest control to harvest management. She learned how she can reduce the quantity of seeds by simply bringing change in the transplantation system and can start saving right from the transplantation.

It was a new concept to her and all villagers attended the training programme. Initially *Rupni Devi* decided to experiment her new acquired skill in 25 decimal of land of her total land of 1 acre. She also had to put a lot of effort to convince her husband and family to try this new technique. After transplantation following the SRI PoP, the field looked desperately poor with 14 days of seedling planted in a comparatively dry (no water logging) field. *Rupni Devi* was also a bit nervous looking the field but when she contacted the BPYP field staff they boosted the confidence of *Rupni Devi*.



After few days when she saw the growth of plants, she was very happy and took her husband to the field. Both were convinced about the production and they decided to convert their full land into SRI paddy cultivation system. Production from 25 decimal of paddy was about 4-5 quintals and in this way if they convert their entire land into paddy cultivation and everything remain fine then they can harvest 14-16 quintals of paddy which will be sufficient for consumption need of *Rupni Devi*'s family. In addition to this she with her husband planned to buy some more agricultural land.

Additional production has boosted her confidence and now she is more confidence to take up the challenges of life.