

## Women of Sarlahi Leading towards self-reliance with the water schemen

There was a time was when most of the women in Sisauria of Sarlahi and Bramha Puri were financially dependent on their husbands or families. The main reason for this was the limited financial resources and the lack of accessible environment for women. But nowadays, women in these areas are also moving towards self-employment. Some are running grocery stores while others are moving towards economic self-reliance by engaging in agriculture and goat rearing.

Women, who used to be limited to household chores and who were hesitant to talk to anyone, now have an increase in self-confidence and awareness. The women there would like to attribute this change in their community to the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation project and especially the livelihood program run with the financial support of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Fund Development Board and Bagmati Seva Samaj Nepal, Hariwan that is providing technical and social support to the program.

The positive changes brought by the drinking water project program in their own words:

### **Pushpa Kumari Devi Yadav is engaged in goat rearing**

Pushpa Kumari Devi Yadav, a resident of Bramhapuri, Sarlahi, says, "My financial situation was not so strong and I was barely earning daily wages with a lot of



difficulty. Sometimes I had to spend many days without getting any daily wage job. After the launching of the Gadhitol Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project in the community, I became a member of the Shree Dharni Baba Women Technical

Support Service group under the livelihood program of the project. I started to save Rs. 50 per month in that group by saving from the money I earned from my daily wages. Since the entire group members were saving, the total amount in the group fund started increasing. Earlier it was a big problem to take loans to solve the financial crisis on any auspicious occasion or other sudden reason.

Even if a loan was found, Lekhandas (the official writer for loan agreement) would never be found. The impact of high-interest rates was intolerable. There were various kinds of problems.

Now that we have joined this group, we have started getting easy loans at low-interest rates. Because of this, we don't have to wander around when we need money. I have been raising goats with a loan from this group. The monthly income is good. I don't have to stay vacant now when there is no wage work. Earnings from both wages and goat farming have helped to better cover household expenses and make life easier than before."

### **The change brought by the grocery store**

Perm Kala Devi Sah, a resident of Sisauria, Sarlahi, is one of the members among the 51 members of the Ram Janaki Women's Technical Services Group formed under the Manharwa Drinking Water and Sanitation Project. She says, "I have been saving Rs 100 per month in the savings program run by the group." When she hadn't joined to the group, she used to work as a daily wage laborer.



When I couldn't find work, it was very difficult to feed myself and my family every day. Now, I am running a grocery store with a loan from the group. Although the shop did not run well in the beginning, now it is ok and I'm earning good and I have repaid the loan taken to open a

grocery store. So, now I am very happy and would like to thank the fund board and its partners for this. "

### **Healthy life with financial self-reliance**

Krishna Kumari Sah, another member of the Manharwa Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Project, is also glad to be a member of Ram Janaki Women's Technical Services Group. "We had not become a member of any women's group before the Manharwa Drinking Water and Sanitation Project came to our village," she said. After the water and sanitation project, Ram Janaki women technical support service group has been formed and the group has received a sum of Twenty Thousand (20,000/-) from the Fund Board. Not only that, after becoming a group, we learned to mobilize savings and loans.



I started vegetable farming with a loan from this group. Now I have grown a variety of vegetables. Our big family is now having a golden opportunity to eat pure vegetables without pesticides. We are nowadays healthier, happier, and joyful than before because of eating delicious pesticide-free vegetables. I have been selling the leftover vegetables in the market and sometimes to my neighbors to keep myself independent so that I can handle small expenses by myself.'



Another consumer of the same drinking water project Ranjana Devi Mandal has also been able to improve her livelihood by raising goats. She had been running the house with great

difficulty for the longest time before. She shared her bitter experience of paying high interest by mortgaging her house and land to get a loan. After starting raising goats with easy and less interest rate loans from the group she is now happy and satisfied.

### **Kitchen garden (Karesabari) of Kanti Devi**

Kanti Devi of Gadhitol Drinking Water and Sanitation Project Bramhapur 9 is also happy now. She is also a member of the Dhami Baba Women's Technical Support Service Group formed under this Gadhitol Rural Water Supply and Sanitation



scheme. She says, "Before this water scheme, no one was aware of the need to form and work in groups, run savings programs and engage in economic activities." We gained knowledge about significance of women's gathering, discipline, involvement in the savings

business, etc., from this livelihood program run with the financial support of the Fund Board and the social and technical support from the Bagmati Service Society.

We, women, began to be inspired to do something only after joining Dhamibaba women's technical and support service group. I have also grown various vegetables in my Karesabari(Kitchen Garden) with a loan from the group. We have not only been able to eat pesticide-free vegetables but we are also earning money by selling them. When I used to buy vegetables from the market, I would have to spend more money and would have to undergo medical treatment due to illness caused by unhealthy food, but now those expenses have been saved. The livelihood program has developed an awareness of the need to drink clean water, stay clean and eat nutritious food.

All the women members of the water supply scheme would like to express their gratitude to the Fund Board and Bagmati Sewa Samaj Nepal for helping us to be aware.

During the recent field visit program of the scheme area Executive Director Mr. Chok Prasad Dhital lauded the patience, friendliness and self-confidence shown by the women group regardless of the time. He open heartedly praised the effort made in such a short span of time by these groups and collected two lakh twenty thousand rupees (Rs. 202000/-) by the Ram Janaki Women's Group and one lakh fifteen thousand rupess (Rs. 1,15000/-) by the Sri Dhami Baba Women's Technical Group. In the same way, he gave more encouragement to continue working diligently.

*Success story written by Sangita Giri Das, a livelihood expert of the Rural Drinking Water and Sanitation Fund Development Committee with the help of Sumit Singh, Wash Officer of Bagmati Seva Samaj Nepal.*