

Case Story #1: Improve livelihood through Irrigation Project

44 years old, Ms. Sushila Rai is permanent resident of Surkhe Village of Siddhicharan Municipality of Okhaldhunga district which is about 8 km from road head. Nowadays, Sushila's identity has been changed in village from housewife to commercial farmer. This drastic change has come in Sushila's life after intervention of Pokting Surke irrigation project. The irrigation Project was implemented in Siddhicharan Municipality of Okhaldhunga district for 61 households with joint contribution of Swiss government and Nepal government in the year 2021.

During the project implementation stage, Sushila worked in treasure position of Water users' association (WUA). She got the opportunity to participate in institutional development training and agricultural related orientation from the program, which enhance her motivation and confidence to execute her duty as a treasure to manage financial matter during project implementation. As a result of her extensive involvement as a treasure, Sushila is working actively as a treasure of the irrigation project since last three years.



Photo 1: Ms. Sushila Rai, Pokting Surke IP, Siddhicharan RM, Okhaldhunga

During conversation she shared that, "Before implementation of irrigation project, we faced scarcity of water for irrigation, we had 0.2-hectare land however we used to cultivate maize and millet in half of the upland." Cultivation of Vegetable and cash crops was beyond their imagination because of not having irrigation, Sushila's family used to buy rice for daily consumption whereas produced grain (maize and millet) of their land also just sufficient for their own consumption. They had no cash income source, so Sushila's husband Mugadhan Rai started to plantation of potato and bought goat and buffalo for meat and milk production in public land in uphill area, which is far from village. This effort of Mugadhan still could not work for better livelihood of family.

Sushila and Mugadhan had responsibility of two daughter and at the same time they had burden of loan which was taken from the community. Mugadhan could not manage basic need of family as well as daughter school expenses where loan was another headache so all those circumferences push him for foreign employment. He went Saudi Arabia in started labour work because of not having skill.

He worked in Saudi Arabia for 8 years however, due to very low income, he could not save money. Sushila said that “My husband salary was USD \$145 /Month, it was only sufficient for his own daily expenses so I suffered from financial crisis for a long time. “My husband returned back from abroad just before one year of construction of irrigation project though he had plan to go back to work.”

After having access of water from irrigation project, new hope has raised in Sushila’s life, she decided to start farming commercially in her 0.2-hectare land with support of her husband.

They got the opportunities to participate in five days training on commercial farming technology and nursery along with one day’s fertilizer production training by local government. This couple got the subsidy agricultural tools, equipment and material from the local government and started plantation of vegetable and cash crops and sold in local market. Mainly they started farming vegetable (tomato, beans, garlic, cabbage, onion, ginger) and continuously doing since last three years. Sushila shared that “we are saving around USD \$ 1818 /per year. During conversation Mugadhan said that “Now I have changed my mind, I will not go abroad in future because we are earning from our own land and I am happy to leave with my family.”

Sushila said that “we are fulling our basic need as well as our two-daughter’s education is also going smoothly through farming so we are hopeful that we can full fill all our needs in future by farming.

Besides farming, Sushila is actively working as treasure in the irrigation scheme also. She said that, “we are collecting operation and maintenance fund from household in monthly basis so we believe, irrigation scheme will function for long run and we will continue our occupation.



Photo 2: Ms. Sushila Rai and Her husband working in Farm

Pokting Surke IP, Siddhicharan RM, Okhaldhunga



Photo 3: Ms. Sushila Rai digging land by using Tractor

This story shows the impact of irrigation in poverty reduction and at the same time women empowerment through women participation in water user's association whereas retain foreign employment by income source through agricultural production.



Family Photo of Sushila Rai