

Lamsingha shows the way

The successful story of the Shriramji Krushak Club of Lamsingha in Kalahandi District

(While discussing about Rural Development issues Development workers and planners in Odisha also use to give example of Ralegaon Siddhi or Hiwre Bazaar of Maharashtra. But many people do not know that within Odisha also we have so many villages who have made remarkable achievements like Ralegaon Siddhi or Hiwre Bazar though their cases have not been highlighted enough. Lamsingha- a tiny village in the drought prone block Narla of Kalahandi district is one such village. A brief story of Lamsingha is as follows.)

Lamsingha is a small village in Narla block having 108 households of which 9 are SC and the rest are from SEBC. Out of the 108 households, only 5 households are landless but all the other households are mostly marginal farmers having land of half acre to two acres. Only 15 households have about three acres of land each. All the lands in the village were rainfed and prone to frequent drought. Because of the small land holding and the drought condition the economy of the village was in a pretty bad shape and except 10 or 15 households almost all the households used to work as Agricultural workers in the neighboring villages to their livelihood. During the year 2002-03 when SVA workers came to the village and started motivating the villagers to sit together and plan for the development of the village, initially the villagers were not listening to SVA workers but they made a number of efforts and gradually the villagers started sitting together. Lamsingha has two hamlets and there had been a very old dispute between the two hamlets for which for the last 120 years they were never sitting together or attending a common feast. However, because of the Micro Level Planning process, initiated by SVA for the first time they came together and the youth of the village decided to ignore century old dispute. Now together they started planning various development activities in the village. The programme they planned was to dig a community dug well for irrigation purpose. For this eight households were to get the benefit but for that they required a credit from the bank. At this point SVA organized a farmers club in the village which is probably the first farmers club in the whole state. The farmers club took a lead role for implementation of the village development plans. SVA introduced them to the KAGB branch Tulapada and the Branch Manager was too happy to fund for such a community effort. Using the water from this well, all the eight households converted a dry patch of about fifteen acres of land to lush green vegetable fields. Following this, several other households decided to go for a lift irrigation point in the river Sandul and for that also they were successful. In the year 2003-04 about 50 acres of land got irrigated during the rabi season and most of the households were involved in cultivation of vegetable crops. The economy of the village made a revolutionary change just within one year. Before one year many of the villagers used to go for work in other villages but now the farmers in Lamsingha needed labourers from outside to work in their fields. Following this, the villagers are moving ahead without any break. Now Lamsingha is considered as one of the most prosperous village not only in Narla block but in the whole district.



Raghunath Pradhan, President of Shriramji Krushak Club, Lamsingha in his tomato field during March-2013. They harvest tomato and other vegetables when the market demand and price is quiet high. (Pic: JP)

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Hearing the remarkable initiative of the villagers the then Collector of Kalahandi Mr. Saswat Mishra made two surprise visit to this village since he was not willing to believe whatever he was

listening from newspaper reports and from others. But after the visit he was convinced and he offered blank supports to the villagers for whatever they would require. At the request of the villagers a second lift irrigation point was commissioned in the village to provide additional irrigation.

Considering the unity and the initiative of the villagers Lamsinga was also included in the Watershed Development Programme under WORLP in which SVA was the Programme Implementing Agency. To implement the WORLP activities the MLP prepared by the villagers earlier was useful and most of the plans were implemented through WORLP. The farmers who were not getting much benefit from the lift irrigation points were now supported with ring wells and also few were supported with farm ponds. Now the crop fields in Lamsinga are no more prone to drought or vagaries of the nature.

Since most of the farmers in Lamsinga are having less than half acre of land their first preference is to grow vegetable and high value crops which is grown after paddy crop of kharif season. Over the years the villagers have developed expertise in vegetable cultivation. The specialty of the farmers in Lamsingha is to grow vegetables which cater to the market when the price remains is very high. Survey conducted recently indicates that every week about 280 quintals of vegetables is sent to different markets from this village. On an average each household in Lamsinga earns about one lakh rupees per annum only from vegetable crops. During the last couple of years SVA has sent several farmers from this village for exposure visit to Maharashtra and various agricultural farms inside Odisha and outside. A number of farmers in the village are now switching over to organic agriculture and they are also getting a much better price for the vegetables grown without chemical fertilizer and pesticide.

Raghunath Pradhan, the President of farmers club recollects that even though he is one of the most affluent farmer in the village two decades ago even in his family even his house there was not enough rice for the whole year. They were depending for rice and food on other villages. But now no one in the village is concerned about their food or nutrition. Almost all the households in Lamsinga have now some farm machinery such as pump set, power tiller etc. or motorcycle and other means for agriculture.

Now the farmers club is planning to introduce dairy and duckery in the village which will give them additional income. (*Report: SVA-Balipada Team*)