



## Community Vegetable Garden - an initiative towards reducing malnutrition

Jethupara is a village under Kapista Gram Panchayat of Mahammadbazar Block, Birbhum district where most of the households belong to scheduled tribes. The major occupation of these households is agriculture in shared land and most of them are daily wage labourer. The agriculture here is totally rainfed. In recent years, climate change has affected the rainfall pattern as well. The erratic nature of rainfall has significantly affected the production of major crops. Hence, most of the male members of the households go for seasonal migration outside the district. Malnutrition is very much visible in this village.



In such a situation, Development Research Communication and Services Centre (DRCSC) intervened there with a climate change adaptation and livelihood project called “TECSAI” in 2021. With 26 extreme poor households a mutual cooperation group was formed namely Chapabaha Sushil Somaj Songothon. Ultimate objective was to build capacity of these households towards income generation, education, health etc.



At the very beginning each and every household was provided handholding training on climate resilient agriculture practices such as developing year-round nutrition garden at household level, cultivating less water intensive crops, using soil moisture conservation techniques etc. Along with that, training on livestock management was also provided to them. In the weekly meetings they started saving a small amount regularly and started discussing

about various initiatives of income generation, livestock management, household level health issues, nutrition etc. They were also provided with some productive assets like vegetable seeds, fruit saplings, small ruminants e.g. hen, duck, goat, sheep, pig etc. to start generating income as alternative livelihood. Nutrition garden in each and every household could be ensured. They started adding vegetables at their daily platter. Gradually they started increasing their income and most importantly they started thinking of doing something together.





In 2023, DRCSC facilitated them to prepare a community vegetable garden on a fallow land of around 1 Acre. The ultimate objective was to produce year-round vegetables for the community to enhance the nutrition security and to sell the surplus in the nearby market as well. They also could converge with Department of Agriculture to get some vegetable seeds, compost etc.



They started producing seasonal vegetables like brinjal, ladies finger, leafy vegetables, ground nut, maize, papaya and some legumes as well. After three months they started consuming the vegetables in their households and apart from that they started selling the surplus in the local market.

In 2023-24, they produced around 184 quintals of vegetables among which they consumed around 127 quintals of the same. Not only they distributed some surplus to the community members but also they were able to sell another 57 quintals in the local market. They earned a total amount of around Rs. 52000/- in a single year. They were able to earn a profit amount of Rs. 45000/- in that much time only. The production is going on.



This community vegetable garden has added a significant change in the life and livelihoods of these extreme poor people. One of the group members, Jhuma was sharing, “At the beginning I was producing vegetables at my homestead only, where the production was sufficient for my family. But this community garden helped us to grow more vegetables which not only serving the purpose of providing more and more nutrition to my family but we are earning some more money also.” Lakkhimoni, another member of the group was very excited to share, “The number of malnourished children in our village has significantly reduced. For me, I buy fishes through selling the surplus vegetables which brings smile on the faces of my children. We wish to produce more vegetables in the upcoming years.”

