

Case Study on Step Pond

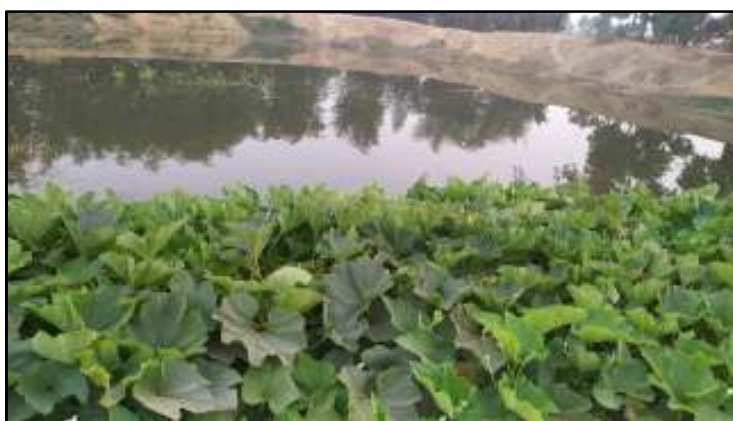
Village: Lara, GP: Sonathali, Block: Kashipur, District: Purulia

The story of Jaher Ayu Mahila Dal of Lara village is nothing short of inspiring. Their journey of renovating the village pond to enhance the sustenance is enough to motivate others. The 2.5 feet deep wetland in this drought-prone village of Purulia was efficient to irrigate 7-8 bighas of paddy field in Kharif



season. Only in the years of heavy rainfall, the villagers were able to cultivate 5 bighas of mustard in Rabi season. *“The major water crisis that we used to face was for doing the domestic chores, it was hard to use the muddy water for household duties”*, said the members of the SHG. They used to travel outside the village to fetch water for domestic work whereas the drinking water for the livestock was also insufficient in the area.

In 2021, the group show the interest to re-excavate the pond to make it perennial. With proper blending of satellite technology and wisdom of the community, it was predicted that the pond can increase greenness and productivity of the land around. An agreement was done between



the group members and land owners before beginning the work of 7 bigha pond. 90 labours including group members on average worked around 180 days in 2021-22 to excavate 12 feet deep perennial community pond. Now the livelihood of the villagers revolves around the pond-

1. Assurance of Kharif Paddy- the water from the pond gives lifesaving irrigation to 50 bighas of paddy. Group members and other villagers who have land near the pond, use the water to grow their paddy. *“Now we grow Swarna instead of Lalat, a paddy variety that need longer duration to harvest; as we know that we have adequate amount of water for irrigation”* said the Didis happily.
2. Increased cropping season- the villagers now grow mustard in 40 bighas of land in rabi season whereas they have also got triple crop in terms of vegetable cultivation which they sell in the market for a stable income. The pond bank is also used to grow vegetables throughout the year. After consuming, the group has earned around Rs. 2000 from selling the surplus in the market which they are planning to use in making arrangements to guard the pond in night.

3. Introduction of Fishery- they have started doing fish cultivation for family consumption and sell. It has not only diversified their food basket but also given an alternative source of income. They have harvested 25 kgs of fish and shared among the 21 member families. After getting training from DRCSC, they are now



- preparing fish feed and has plan to carry this venture out commercially by the group of women which will ensure their source of income.
4. Reduced drudgery of women- as water is now available for whole year, the drudgery attached to fetch water for domestic chores has reduced for women. The pond has also secured the drinking water for livestock.

“This is our pond, we were responsible to excavate it, we are responsible to utilize the water and resources attached to it, we will take care of it as it has brought major changes in our life” said the group members with happiness and a sense of ownership.