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PHOTOGRAPHS
 IEC DIVISION,
 MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

PHOTO DIVISION,
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EDITORIAL OFFICE
 ROOM NO. 655/661, NIRMAN BHAVAN
 A-WING (GATE NO. 5), MINISTRY OF RURAL
 DEVELOPMENT, NEW DELHI-110011
 TEL. 23015014, 23011952
 FAX 011-23015014
 E-MAIL : kurupage@yahoo.co.in
 kurukshetra2@rediffmail.com
 hemana@indiatimes.com

FOR SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES,
 RENEWALS AND AGENCY INFORMATION
 PLEASE CONTACT :

A.K. DUGGAL
 Assistant Business Manager
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Kurukshetra seeks to carry the message of Rural Development to all people. It serves as a forum for free, frank and serious discussion on the problems of Rural Development with the focus on Rural Uplift.

The views expressed by the authors in the articles are of their own. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the government or the organisations they work for.



HESLA VILLAGE

Towards a New Horizon

Binay Kumar Sahay

Chotanagpur plateau is agro-ecologically and socio-economically one of the poorest regions in India, predominated by scheduled tribes. The Eastern India Rainfed Farming Project supported by DFID, GOI, KRIBHCO and managed by Gramin Vikas Trust commenced its work in Chotanagpur plateau from 1995. The project (EIRFP) was from the beginning, poverty and gender focussed and participative in nature. The overall goal of the project is to improve the livelihoods of the poor men and women especially from the deprived sections of community.

Situation prior to EIRFP

Hesla is one of the villages adopted by EIRFP. It is pre-dominantly a tribal village situated in Latehar district of Jharkhand. The livelihood of Oraon tribals inhabiting this village depends upon the forest and the main crop of this area is maize. *Bhagats* are the religious leaders of the village who usually influence most of the decisions taken in the village.

Focus on Social and Human Assets

The EIRFP emphasized on social as well as human assets which lead towards transforming the livelihood in the village but initially the traditional leadership considered the project staff as "Dikhu" ("Dikhu"-an outsider) and not allowed to enter in the village.

Despite its priority to intervene in poorest and tribal dominated area- the EIRFP has shifted the work in neighbouring villages too. The EIRFP emphasized on participatory bottom-up approach and believed that "community participation in a development programme is not only inspiring the people in rendering financial assistance, giving own labour or resource mobilization. In true sense participation of people can only be considered if they also have a role to play in formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a programme"

The participatory nature of work, the process to involve the community, transparency and facilitation of the community for development and bringing them into the mainstream- which usually makes the project different from government's way of functioning - promotes

belongingness- attracts a group of youth in the Hesla village and have come forward to take lead in involving the villagers in the process of development.

The Jankar system developed by the project became an effective tool for capacity building and further scaling up their skill on different components and management of the groups effectively.

Vision Plan of Community

A series of meetings and facilitation of EIRFP led to vision development and generated a group fund and member of each household have contributed in the process. Initially they agreed to use the fallow land, community land etc. for creation of additional fund for village development and have cultivated simum & black gram in about 25 acre of land in the first year. The level of confidence, motivation, dedication, participation of the villagers etc. led to development of more systematic plan- exploring the existing resources for cash crop- and a reasonably good amount have been generated under this process.

Linkage with Government

A meet and match programme was organized by EIRFP to bring the local financial institutions, government departments more closer to the group. They have appreciated their bottom-up planning system and assured to extend all possible support in execution of their village development plan. An action plan was developed to extend the support by different departments and financial institutions and as a result they have link road, irrigation channel and one tractor on loan etc. The group is managing it very well - the confidence, vision, leadership, participation, belongingness and individual's contribution etc. are the key for its success.

Attack on root cause of Poverty

Further the group members decided to attack on the root cause of the poverty and organized 36 surrounding villages to extend the support in the mission. The highly motivated dedicated youth have decided to run a school and have engaged the local people for teaching purpose. At present about 400 children from these 36 villages are in



Finance from bank strengthens the group objectives



Group vision for greater role

the school- offering challenge to the government education system in the remote, tribal dominated area.

They registered the group as an institution committed to sustainable development especially the deprived community. It can be said that the facilitation of EIRFP by influencing the social and human assets in the village Hesla - transformed the livelihood of the most deprived tribal community. The facilitation of EIRFP for participatory

process of development encouraged the community for not only formulation of their plan but also its execution, monitoring and evaluation and developed a sense of self reliance with vision and confidence.

The author is Field Specialist (Social Development) Eastern India Rainfed Farming Project, Gramin Vikas Trust, Ranchi, Jharkhand.

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