



STORY CARD

IN YOUR VILLAGES IN BIHAR more than 85 percent of these small holder farming families are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. On average, they have less than 1.5 acres (0.60 hectares) of land and less than an acre is able to be cultivated. They mostly plant a single crop of rice in the summer season. Farming is mainly monsoon-dependent. Only about 15 percent of the cultivated land in the proposed area has irrigation facilities from government-funded water harvesting structures. On average, each family is able to cultivate one ton of paddy per acre of land. This meets the rice needs of five family members for around five to six months. The average diet is mostly rice, potatoes, a few leafy plants that grow in the wild, or vegetables that few families can afford. Some of the families have backyard poultry and goats that are sold during the lean season or when they need cash for emergencies. These animals are rarely used for consumption.

Women farmers lack knowledge of and exposure to improved agriculture practices, quality inputs, diversified farming methods/practices, crop diversification, and appropriate tools. Agriculture extension services in the area are poor. Most of these farmers do not have organized strength or systems at the community level to obtain access to rural agriculture credit, government agriculture extension, and poverty alleviation programs. Although there are several government-sponsored programs, such as Bihar Rural Livelihood Program and National Rural Health Mission, they face severe implementation challenges in reaching out to the large rural population.

During the lean season male members of the community usually migrate to distant cities like Delhi, Haryana, and Surat in the Gujrat State to support their families. They mostly engage as agriculture or earth work-related laborers in distant urban towns or rural areas, making very little money to send back to their families or bring back home. As a result, these families are severely cash strapped in the lean seasons and are unable to meet their health care or education needs. When the men are away working as migrant laborers, the women are left at home to take care of the children and other elderly family members, plus are responsible for managing the fields and small livestock. Without readily available cash, they often face problems in handling health and other household emergencies.

Bihar and Jharkhand are fraught with deep-rooted social inequalities along gender, caste, and class lines. Women are the most vulnerable and unempowered due to low literacy levels; lack of awareness about rights and entitlements; and poor access and control over resources, such as land, capital, information, etc. Although women contribute significantly to agriculture in terms of manual labor, their contribution is hardly recognized. Due to prevailing social norms and lack of gender sensitization among the community, women do not have a voice in agriculture decisions or household matters related to crops, spending choices, and family well being.