

Series of Changes in Jamundanda

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It seems vegetable farming is going to prove fruitful for Fulmaya Nepali. Until last year she had no knowledge about vegetable farming. But since this year she sold vegetables like spinach, garlic, onion, coriander that she planted with the help of her husband, in the *hatiya* (weekly market) and earned three hundred rupees. Never in her dreams had she imagined that she would earn so much just by selling vegetables. There is no record of the amount of vegetables consumed by the family. In a community where a notion persists that it is only the upper caste and well off who grow and eat vegetables, it is quite unusual for a *dalit* (so called lower caste) woman to make an earning by selling vegetables.

Like Fulmaya, the people belonging to 42 family households of Jamundanda, Harichaur VDC – 8 in Baglung district are attracted to vegetable farming these days. All the people who reside here are *dalits* and traditionally they are tailors and black smiths by occupation. These people, who have been making a living out of this occupation, have been lately drawn to various other vocations as well. For generations gripped in the vicious cycle of poverty and illiteracy, they have not been able to acquire any appropriate education and skill based knowledge. That's why, other than physical labour there is no option for them in various other professions.



Fulmaya working in kitchen guardian

Alongside the changes in the country, series of changes can be observed in Jamundanda. But those changes are not political; they are linked to the lifestyle of the local people. After the initiation of water and sanitation project with the technical and financial support of NEWAH, active partnership of Gaza Youth Club, the sparks of changes became evident. A community once known to be 'filthy' is now clean. Toilets have come up in each and every household and are in use. The wastes in the community are well managed. Time spent on fetching water has been saved due to the access of water in the doorsteps of each and every household. Especially the women have found much relief. People also received kitchen gardening training from the supporting organisation, while the ultra poor households got some vegetable seeds as well. Kitchen gardening became possible in this community even in the dry seasons by using the tap waste water.

Jamundanda is an example of how one development aspect in a life of a human contributes to other developments. The water and sanitation project helped people have access to water and sanitation services. In return they started vegetable farming and began eating nutritious diets. Vegetables also became a source of their income.

Another example of transformation in this community is the saving and credit cooperative initiative of the people. Presently there are 43 members in the cooperative; of them 36 households are also the members of the water and sanitation users committee. Monthly they collect hundred rupees from each household. The practice of acquiring loans for heavy interest from the local money lenders has come to an end. The members can take loan from the cooperative at simple interest rates.

Since she started vegetable farming, Fulmaya has not had to ask for any money from her husband to save in the cooperative. She says, "No one has to rely on others to meet petty expenses, if they were to work hard like us in vegetable farming."

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