

A successful young farmer:

Pottangi is a tribal dominated block in Koraput district of Odisha. The tribal communities traditionally practice shifting cultivation of crops like millets and pulses supplemented by collection of forest fruits, roots, and honey etc. The fragile ecosystem of the upland tribal regions had also been affected by deforestation and rampant shifting cultivation practice, causing extensive soil erosion, and thereby reducing the capacity of land to rejuvenate and maintain its natural vegetation. Due to low productivity of soil and erratic rainfall, farmers and especially youth of the block had become migrant labourers.

At this juncture Baraja village of Badanala MWS was included under watershed programme in the year 2010-11. Sadhu Mari, a young tribal, aged 24 years was unable to feed his family of 5 members with agriculture alone. He owned 4 acres of land out of which 3 acres were unproductive upland. He used to cultivate 1 acre of paddy but the yield could hardly suffice to meet the need of his family.

In order to provide irrigation to the agricultural lands, different storage structures like check dam, diversion weir across the perennial nala with field channels were constructed. Farmers were encouraged to take up crops even in up lands. Seeing the impact of watershed development in the



village, Sri Mari approached the Badanala micro-watershed committee for support and guidance to take up some off season vegetable crops in his land by using the available irrigation. In the meantime training programme for unemployed youth was being organised at School of Horticulture, Kandhamal. He was advised to attend the training programme. After completion of the training, he was supported with inputs out of Rain fed Area Development fund for off season potato and coriander cultivation in 2 acres of land. Besides input assistance from the Government he had

invested an amount of Rs 12,000/- of his own fund and worked hard along with his family members.

He got a net income of Rs 60,000/- out of 2 initial crops within a period of 4 months. Since irrigation support was available through the check dam he took field pea and other vegetables in 2 acres of land and got similar profit. In 2011-12, he opted for scented rice in the low land and hybrid



maize, coriander, ginger in the uplands covering his entire holding of 4 acres. Now he is getting an annual income of Rs 2,20,000/- from farming and living a life of dignity and comfort.

Within a short span of two years, his socio economic condition has improved with an increased asset base. His old thatched house has been converted to a pucca house. He is imparting training to other interested youth and farmers on different crops. He has provided engagement to 10 persons in his farm



throughout the year and is now a source of inspiration to other farmers. In recognition of his work IISWC-ICAR, Sunabeda felicitated him with a certificate and prizes.

During interaction the young tribal entrepreneur opined that “I was about to lose my world, when watershed programme came and saved my life and I could see the light of the day”.

