

CASE STUDY

No. 10

‘I wanted to help more people’



NAME: Lakho Devi
AGE: 52 Years
EDUCATION: Class VII
MUKHIYA: Since 2011
PAST EXPERIENCE: Cultivator

PANCHAYAT: Ichak
PANCHAYAT SAMITI: Latehar Sadar
DISTRICT: Latehar
STATE: Jharkhand

Lakho Devi is a confident and outspoken woman. Her husband works in the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), and is currently posted in Jammu & Kashmir. After finishing her household chores she came to Panchayat Bhawan to do her routine official work, and to meet us. During the initial conversation she shared that before becoming Mukhiya of Ichak Gram Panchayat (which comes under Latehar Sadar Block of Latehar District), she was primarily a homemaker apart from engaging in some farming activities on her own land. In terms of educational qualification she has passed in every possible manner, by accompanying them to banks, helping them with bank formalities, visiting police stations and other institutions villagers are not confident of going to alone. What, we asked her, made her want to become a Mukhiya? She replied that earlier, when she was mostly confined to her house, completing her daily chores, she felt a great desire to interact with people and to help them. Later, she realised, that if she became a Mukhiya, she would meet more villagers, and support the needy.

Lakho Devi had done good works and maintained a good rapport with the villagers during the first tenure because of which she was elected again for the second term in the Panchayat election that was held in 2015. During the first tenure she constructed roads, ponds, wells and Chaupals, (a common sitting place in the village) for the welfare of the people.



Road constructed in Ichak Gram Panchayat

She has also helped in passing old age pensions and showing people how to access benefits under the Indira Awas Yojana (a housing scheme for poor villagers. During her current tenure she has placed greater stress on the construction of dobhas (small ponds) under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) and roads from the grants of the 14th Finance Commission. She also made a complaint that the Public Health Department has not released the payment that is due under the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) till now.

When asked which of her achievements prompted the villagers to choose her as their Mukhiya, she started with her contribution to resolving conflicts in Panchayats themselves, rather than taking them to police stations. She recalled an instance in 2013-2014 when she was sanctioned 75 old age pensions at once. She also facilitated Aadhar camps in her village which has enabled the maximum villagers of Panchayats in getting Aadhar cards.

Lakho Devi, while explaining the processes related to organizing Gram Sabhas, clearly stated that she used to first inform the Ward Members so that the information could be passed down to villagers of their particular wards about the meeting, along with date, time and place. She herself precedes the meeting and tries to fulfil the demands of villagers by sanctioning various resolutions after detailed discussion. She informed us that registers are maintained in her office and all the details of meetings are recorded in the registers.

When asked about the Yojna Banao Abhiyan (Gram Panchayat Development Plan) she said that it was made with the participation of the villagers at Gram Sabhas, where resource-mapping of the Panchayat was done. By the third day of each Sabha, needs were identified and priorities documented. After finalisation, the document was sent to Block officials.

In regard to the MGNREGS, she explained that Lakho Devi, along with the Panchayat Sewak and Rozgar Sewak, sign the document and send it to the Block Office for approval. However, during the discussion it was felt that the Gram Panchayat is not creating a labour budget, nor is it taking into account the use of resources that are coming through the 14th Finance Commission.

Lakho Devi said that as soon as she became Mukhiya for the first time, she received a three-day training at Latehar where she was taught about the roles of Mukhiya, their responsibilities, various government schemes, and their implementation. She could not understand all of it as it was too much for her to take in within such a short time. When she went for the second training at SIRD Ranchi, she got training on the same subjects including MGNREGS, the 13th Finance Commission, and Social Security Schemes. But this time she was able to understand more as she was able to reconnect to the things taught in the initial training at Latehar. She also admitted that once she started to attend more meetings at the BDO and DC office, she could understand more as she was able to establish the links between the training sessions.

During her second tenure in office, she again received a three-day training at SIRD Ranchi in July 2016, where the topics covered were the MGNREGS, 14th Finance Commission, Pensions, responsibilities of the Mukhiya in relation to implementation of programmes of different departments, such as health and education. She again received training at Latehar on the same subject for two days in December 2016.

Lakho Devi suggests that training should be simple and easy to understand and on a regular basis. According to her, even a day's training suffices, if it is carried out on a regular basis, and encompasses all government schemes, roles and responsibilities.

She said categorically that she never faced any discrimination from male counterparts. Rather her problems have more to do with transportation (going back and forth to administrative centres such as the Block and District Offices). Provisions made do not adequately support her travel.