

CASE STUDY

No. 2

Learning by Doing



NAME: Dasmati Devam
AGE: 36 Years
EDUCATION: Intermediate
MUKHIYA: Since 2015
PAST EXPERIENCE: Social Service

PANCHAYAT: Tutugutu
PANCHAYAT SAMITI: Jhikpani
DISTRICT: West Singhbhum
STATE: Jharkhand

Providing clothes to the poor, motivating and sending children of the village to school, rushing to the side of people in dire need—these were just some of the self-imposed duties Dasmati Devam and her husband busied themselves in. Not always is charity recognised or rewarded, but the soft-spoken woman found herself being persuaded by her fellow villagers into standing for election to the post of Mukhiya of Tutugutu Panchayat. ‘Apne paise se kab tak aap samaj seva karoge (How long will you spend your own resources on social welfare)?’ they asked her. Unsurprisingly, Dasmati Devam won the seat in Tutugutu, which comes under West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand.

Winning the election bought many challenges her way. Talking about her challenges, she confessed that since this was her first time at the job, there were some difficulties in the beginning, but that was part for the course. She forged ahead and began by motivating many people of her Panchayat to construct toilets (under the Swachha Bharat Mission), which she proudly led us to see for ourselves, also dobha (small pond) (under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme - MGNREGS). Even some pukka roads and a concrete bridge have been constructed (under the MGNREGS) and the 14th Finance Commission, and further works are under construction.



Dobha Construction in panchayat

Water supply is the main issue in the Panchayat. The villager had wanted a hand pump but there is no provision for of installing such pumps under the 14th Finance Commission. Dasmati is hopeful that dobha construction will be able to address some of the issues related to water scarcity. She also said that since the main occupation of villagers is farming, there is a demand for irrigation. Unfortunately, work related to dobha construction has stopped due to issues of late payments.

She told us that 300-400 Vridha (old age) pensions have been sanctioned. She shared that many bank accounts have been opened in the Panchayat during the last one year. Regarding the Aadhar Card, she said that her people didn't understand that it was for their benefit.

It is the Panchayat Sevak (secretary) who maintains the records of the accounts and of the minutes of the Gram Sabha meetings, as she is unskilled in writing and record-keeping. On one occasion, when a meeting had been organised by the Gram Sabha to discuss the problem of scarcity of school teachers, and she was asked to take required action, she recounted the difficulties she faced as she had no knowledge on whom to approach, where to direct the applications—or how to write an application at all. She also talked of problems related to distributing budgets judiciously, or even of knowing how to maintain a cashbook.

She meticulously jotted down her list of difficulties, informing us that 5 villages came under the Panchayat, issues arose in the distribution of funds under various schemes because the funds themselves were limited. A frequent question put to her by confused villagers is ‘Dusre sab gaon me diya , mera gaon me kyu nahi diya (You allocated funds to all the other villages, why not mine)?’.

Capacities and challenges

Dasmati has received training in MGNREGA, 14th Finance Commission and PRI (Panchayati Raj Institution) from SIRD [State Institute of Rural Development] in Ranchi. While discussing the virtues of the cashless system she said that she had received a day’s training on the system given by the Prakhand (Block) but was unable to understand it as she has rarely used a mobile phone or any other digital devices.

Dasmati said that she wants to acquire more knowledge of Government Schemes such as MGNREGA, 14th Financial Commission and others, along with the process of how to get the schemes sanctioned, budget distribution, cashbook and record-maintenance and writing applications, so that she can exercise her roles and responsibilities effectively for the development of the Panchayat.