

Needy's Friend

Gobardhan Kamara lives in Balipetaguda village of Kendar GP with his family consisting of his wife and only daughter. He owns two acres of land out of which 0.5 acre are low land where he grows two crops (paddy). Besides he also grows Ragi and Niger in the uplands during the rainy season. The harvest supports his family for four to five months. For the rest of part of the year he has to search for wage labour or resort to wood and charcoal trade.

He had a pair of bullocks of his own which he used for ploughing and other agriculture activities. Unfortunately last year, before onset of monsoon, (May 2007) one of the bullocks died suddenly and the other fell ill for a long time. Gobardhan couldn't think of any other alternative. His financial condition was not so sound that he could immediately purchase a bullock. Though he had some savings from his wage labour, it was not adequate to purchase a bullock. He couldn't even venture to ask for a loan from the money lender as he would have to pay high rate of interest. If he fails to repay the loan in time, then the sahuakar will take away the bullock. He was in a fix.

He thought of an idea. He had become a member of Luhaguli Farmer's Association facilitated by Pragati to organize the farmers of Kendar and Manbar Pnachyats and promote Sustainable Agriculture through organic practices. There are now 94 farmers in the Association who are adopting organic practices. They have collected Rs 50/- per head for membership of the Association and they have prepared a set of byelaws for themselves. The Association members hold monthly meetings on 25th of each month where they discuss about the issues and concerns of farmers. They have also established a Seed Bank to extend support to farmers of the locality for seed and organic fertilizers and liaison with line departments for mobilization of Govt. schemes. Gobardhan decided to put forth his plight before the Association as the monsoon was fast approaching and if he is unable to take up agriculture activities in time, his family would have to starve in coming days or migrate to other place in search of wage labour. If possible he would borrow some money from the Association and purchase a bullock. Otherwise it would be very difficult for a poor farmer like him to tide over the crisis.

The members of the Association were moved by the plight of Gobardhan. It is for mutual help and support they have formed the Association. They decided to support Rs 1500/- as loan without interest as they weren't having adequate funds. Gobardhan had his own savings of Rs 3000/-.He could purchase a bullock with Rs 4500/- and take up agriculture activities in time. He had grown paddy, Ragi and Niger in his land and harvested 5 quintals of paddy and 3 quintals of Ragi. He has also raised organic brinjal and tomato in 30 cent of land. He could earn Rs 6000/- by selling vegetables and Niger. With this he was able to repay the loan he has availed from the Association.

Gobardhan is very much thankful to the Association for the timely help. He felt that without the financial support of the Association he wouldn't have been able to purchase a bullock and pursue his agricultural activities. He has now decided to avail loan from the Association for construction of a vermi compost pit. This kind of organized effort of the farmers has created a platform for mutual help and promotion of organic practices.

Prepared By

Pragati, Koraput