

Mid Himalyan Watershed Development Project brings sea-change

Press Note

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Shimla

Bimlo Devi, like any other woman of Sherpur Village in Chamba District would wake up before the crack of dawn and walk almost eight kms of hilly and forested terrain to fetch fodder for the cattle. This daily grind left them with little time to attend to other pressing domestic chores. Life was indeed extremely harsh and difficult in most parts of the State. Thanks to the World Bank's Mid-Himalayan Watershed Development Project made successful by community efforts, the winds of change are blowing in village after village and district after district of the hill state. Two years down the line, the women of Sherpur, and of any other village for that matter, are today singing a different tune. The project seems to have achieved the objective of enabling the people to rediscover their innate potential and recharge their economy.

The assistance provided by the World Bank has changed life and living for most citizens of Himachal Pradesh. According to the World Bank report, after implementation of the watershed project, the average household income has increased by 50 per cent; crop yields by 75 per cent and crop diversity too has improved from one-two to three-four crops.

According to the World Bank's Baseline Survey, 90 percent of the people own land, the average size of the holding being less than half-an-acre. The project's greatest achievement lies in ensuring sustainable management of land and water resources while enhancing the livelihood of rural inhabitants.

The World Bank Mid Himalayan Watershed Development Project unleashed activities touching almost every aspect of life in the state. Plantation, soil conservation, water harvesting,

horticulture, agriculture and many income generating activities with community participation were taken up in a big way.

The trees planted in 12 hectares of degraded forest area in Sherpur in Chamba district by group of women in 2006-07, have since turned the area into a thick forest. The village is set amidst idyllic surroundings of lush green fields dotted with tall trees with beautiful snow-capped Dhauldhar. The user groups zealously guard their new and upcoming forest. The Sherpur panchayat has been given first prize of Rs. 4 lacs for bring greenery.

“The project has made life worth living. Now we have time to take up other activities of the project and plan to make paper plates and do knitting and poultry farming.” Says an inspired Bimo Devi. The entire produce will be sold through a cooperative store in Banikhet.

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