

Breaking Barriers on the Kakra Riverbank: The Story of Sheuli Soren

Sheuli Soren, a 34-year-old Adivasi woman from Katapara community, lives on the bank of the Kakra River in Chirirbandar, Dinajpur, with her husband, Som Mardi, an agricultural day laborer, and their three children, two of whom go to school while the youngest is still small. Every rainy season floods wash away parts of their homestead, waterlogging destroys their vegetable crops, and during droughts farm labor becomes scarce, leaving the family in constant uncertainty. To survive, Sheuli also sells her labor, yet like many women she receives lower wages than men for the same work. With limited land, unsafe drinking water, open defecation, poor sanitation, and almost no connection with government services, her struggles are compounded. She dreams of securing a more stable livelihood and recognition for her work. Through the project implemented by Come To Work and Africa-Asia Impact, Sheuli began actively participating in community meetings and trainings, maintaining full attendance, and for the first time she engaged directly with local government officials through a meeting, where she expressed her needs and opinions. This experience, shared with other Adivasi women, strengthened their collective confidence to voice their rights, demand equal wages, and seek government support for resilient agriculture, safe water, and latrines, breaking long-standing silence and barriers that had kept them invisible. Alongside this increased agency and advocacy, Sheuli gained access to climate-resilient seeds and seedlings and learned adaptation practices such as raised-bed gardening, grafting fruit trees, rooftop and tower gardening, hanging nurseries, and vermin compost production. She received grafted mango, papaya, bean, and bottle gourd seedlings as well as vermicompost materials, and began building market linkages to sell her produce at better prices.

“Before this project, we never imagined sitting in front of government officers. Now I can share my needs, ask for seeds, training, and market support, and believe that change is possible for women like us,” says Sheuli with pride. “We women farmers face not only floods and droughts, but also the daily struggle of unsafe water and lack of latrines in our villages. We want climate-resilient seeds, training on new technologies, and fair access to GoB services. Most of all, we ask for regular visits and joint action from government offices—because without safe water, Climate resilient latrine, good health, and strong farming support, our children cannot have a better future.” – Sheuli Soren, Adivasi farmer



By Munzurul Karim, Climate Adaptation Consultant
October 2025