

First Time Farming

Bhayialal and Chunki Sahariya seem so at home and on their farming land that it is difficult to imagine them anywhere else. A small yellow canvas and the shade of a tree protect the few belongings and food they need to spend the entire day here and they openly admit they miss the place if they have to stay at home.



On one side of their 1.5 acre plot Bhayialal brother can be seen tending to his own land and on the other lies the two acres owned by his father. But until two – three years ago none of them had ever farmed before. Like the rest of their tribal community they had been brought up living off a precarious wage which, when it could be assured, amounted to very little and often required that they migrate to find the work in the first place to earn their livelihoods

This lifestyle continued until a few years back, because this community neither had knowledge nor experience to cultivate the land for income. “We’re not from that caste so we didn’t know much about farming.” Indeed, even the most experienced of small scale farmers would have had a difficult job turning a rock-filled plot of Bundelkhandi wasteland into fertile fields.

The DA approached this couple’s community two years ago, in the knowledge that they had land going to waste. They carried out a series of meetings to explain techniques like agrihorticulture, Wadi concept, field bunding, green manuring and also the advantages of using high yield crop varieties. Exposure visits to lush agricultural land surrounding and the villages where the farmer’s have adopted and demonstrated the benefits also turned out a critical component to create interest towards agriculture.

Bhayialal and Chunki may not know it, but they are using farming techniques and seed varieties ignored or unheard of by many other farmers of Bundelkhand, who have been in the business their whole lives. But perhaps this is exactly the kind of head start a new farmer needs. They have already learnt a lot in these first two years and with such high levels of enthusiasm and pride for the work, they appear to be very good farmers in the wadi area.

- Under the TDF-wadi 500 sahariya tribal families have adopted the Wadi and putting their interest and efforts towards rewarding livelihood option, and land owners have been turned into farm owners
- The project team has spent an incredible amount of time, in totally new geographical area of working in simply preparing backward communities to engage in anything other than labour. Once mindsets are changed, it becomes very easy to work with such communities.