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Niketon Chakma Redefines Local Service Provider in his Community with Support of the Leadership to Ensure Adequate Nutrition Project



Niketan Chakma was born and brought up in Binadan village in Khagrachhari hill district. Now, at 45 years old, he lives with his wife and two daughters. After completing his secondary school certificate (SSC) exam, he was forced to drop out of school to earn an income for his family. To support his family financially, he started farming his land which he now does full time. Niketan has 80 decimals of arable land where he has started producing different nutritious crops like onions, chili, and rice. Compared to other farmers, he produces more crops with a high quality thanks to market analysis support which he received from the Leadership to Ensure Adequate Nutrition (LEAN) project, funded by the European Union. Niketas was selected in 2019 as a local service provider (LSP) by LEAN within the agricultural domain.

Through this opportunity, Niketan received training on environmentally sustainable agricultural skill development followed by refresher training on improved techniques of vegetable cultivation through experts from public and private sectors. After training completion, he started to provide technical support and advice to the local farmers on nutrition sensitive vegetable cultivation. He was also trained by the LEAN project on organic and bio friendly agricultural practices like vermicompost production, and its uses in vegetable farming, disadvantages of pesticides for pest control, and the use of environmentally friendly pheromone traps.

Key to his enterprise development, and with the support of the LEAN project, Niketon learned to produce vermicompost and established a small vermicompost production business where he sells compost and worms to the local farmers as a source of additional income. Last year, he earned BDT 8,000 by selling earthworms and vermicompost (1.5 kg earthworm with worth BDT 3,000 and 250 kg vermicompost with worth BDT 5,000). His cost of production was BDT 3,700 and his net profit was BDT 4,300 (EUR 43.00). He sold vermicompost to 21 neighboring farmers. His wife was also involved with vermicompost production. Local farmers are also getting benefitted by using vermicompost in their field.

Niketan has been selected as a Micro Seed Vendor by private company AR Malik Seeds, and sells quality seed to farmers. Through selling seeds, he is getting commission from companies. In the last year, he sold vegetable seeds (gourd, okra, cucumber, snake gourd, bottle gourd and radish seeds) to more than 35 farmers, which is worth about BDT 25,300 and his investment was BDT 20,100, while net profit from seed business was about BDT 5,200. He collects seed purchase orders from local farmers and delivers quality seeds to them in a timely manner with related advice and demonstrations. As a result of this work, the demand for his services amongst the community has grown rapidly in the last year, particularly as COVID has disrupted traditional seed supply chains. In the summer season, he produced Okra with new variety of seed named 'super sumi' which he collects from A.R Malik Seeds. In the okra plot, he used his own produced vermicompost that reduced the uses of chemical fertilizer. From his 15 decimals of land, he sold 621 kg of Okra and earned BDT 26,200 while his cost of production was BDT 4,150. He sold the Okra at the Upazila market with a good price. Now he is sharing his experiences with fellow farmers and selling the new variety seeds in his seed shop as a seed vendor.

Niketon is thankful to the LEAN staff and European Union for helping bring this change to his livelihood and he plans to expand his services well beyond the current 80 farmers he serves in the next year.

