Inhabitants of Banke District are one of the most vulnerable communities in Nepal who live in constant fear of flooding as they are surrounded by Rapti, Babai, and Mankhola Rivers. Having lived with flood disaster for many decades, people of Binauna VDC have certain indigenous knowledge used for generations for prediction of flood.

Ramwati Yadav (42) from Aalinagar 9, Binauna VDC, Banke is a permanent resident of this VDC. He recalls how they used to predict flood prior to the implementation of SEWIN Project.

“We did not have a proper system to predict flood or to inform us about the approaching flood. The only way we knew was to observe water in the watershed and the strange and distinct smell coming from the stream. The ants marching with eggs on their back or crabs coming out of the water in large numbers were some of the indicators we observed to watch the flood. However, these indicators were unreliable, and unsystematic.

Sometimes we used to give due importance to these indicators which would start a pandemonium about the flood in the whole community. People would take their children and their belongings as fast as they could and run away to the higher ground. But there are times when we have ignored the signs and have suffered.”

Old and new practices go hand in hand

Though the traditional practices were helpful in predicting flood, sometimes it did not give the community enough time for preparation. Moreover, it was not something to be relied upon wholly.

“SEWIN Project has created awareness and increased our knowledge on EWS. Though the traditional knowledge was helpful it was not sufficient. I have also learned that early warning alone is not enough to save lives but early preparedness and early action is equally important. This year I will contact the gauge reader, listen to radio and also look for traditional indicators during monsoon to alert the community about the approaching flood.” says Yadav.