

Empowered Women SHG's in the Management of Animal Feed Mixing Plant in a Drought Prone Region - A Case Study

Lutheran World Relief (LWR), Baltimore had partnership with Indian Rural Reconstruction Movement (IRRM) to undertake youth empowerment programs in Pulicherla Mandal of Andhra Pradesh for enhancing the agenda of Sustainable Agriculture and drought mitigation. Since Pulicherla area is located in a rain shadow region, crop failure is a common feature, unemployment, under employment and out migration are common features. Since adequate number of milk chilling units are located in the area. Dairy development has become a profitable enterprise for the poorest of the poor.

Saraswathi after completing her graduation worked with IRRM & SARRA in Tamilnadu and promoted 60 Women's SHG's in Pulicherla Mandal. Periodic interactions, participation in savings, capacity building programs and bank linkages for Farm and Non Farm enterprise development initiatives enabled more than 350 families to obtain support for introducing milch animals. The scarce water resources in the operational area were utilized for the promotion of green fodder by the Women Self Help Groups, although the dairy farmers were obtaining profit on the enterprises they found that a major portion of their investments were being taken away by the corporate agencies like Hindustan Lever and their associates for providing feed concentrates to the dairy farmers.

Saraswathi after completing her graduation worked in a drought prone area and helped in the promotion of Women's Self Help Groups. The majority of women farmers were majorly dependent on dairy farming. Provision of green fodder and feed concentrates were the critical factors for enhancing animal health and milk production. 6 years of ground level work with the SHG's through internal savings and bank linkages enabled Saraswathi to guide the SHG's to initiate a feed mixing plant and help more than 15,000 cattles & dairy farmers to develop easy access to quality animal feed. A rare phenomena of enterprise development to empower marginalized women through dairy development.

Since provision of green fodder and feed concentrates are highly critical for enhancing animal health and milk productivity the women's self help groups decided to explore the options to undertake the initiative of introducing a feed mixing plant. The SHG Network Members enrolled them selves under the Chief Ministers Youth Empowerment (CMEY) Program and participated in the capacity building programs for enterprise development organized by the Government Agencies. The technical training enabled the SHG to obtain bank credit to the tune of Rupees 200 Thousand and the members provided Rupees 100 Thousand for the purchase of machinery and related infrastructure. The SHG's negotiated with the Government Agencies for the regular supply of molasses, which is a critical input in the preparation of feed concentrates. Slowly and steadily the SHG's have worked together to achieve

significant levels of success in the production of Animal Feed Concentrates and promoting distributing channels, within a span of 2 years the SHG Network is in a position to produce 100 metric tones of animal feed which is being supplied to seven milk chilling plants located in Chittoor District. More than 15,000 cattles & dairy farmers have easy access to feed concentrates. The SHG's have given highest importance for promoting this rare initiative. The feed mixing unit provides continuous employment for 6 members and also several SHG members function as Feed Distribution Agents. They have crossed several hurdles for establishing the unit. The feed mixing plant initiative in a drought prone region by Women SHG to assist more than 10,000 dairy farmers has become a rare phenomenon. The feed mixing plant is being visited by several Women's SHG's from the District.

Young, educated and energetic women with imagination and grass roots level experiences can play a strategic role to transform the quality life of the marginalized rural poor through various development options. **Saraswathi has demonstrated and has converted impossible into a possible initiative.** She became the Role model for many unemployed youth. They are asking her guidance to start the Feed factories.



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**The Team Leader Ms.Saraswathi with the baby
along with the SHG Members**
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