

PROJECT  
UTTHAN  
STORIES FROM THE FIELD



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## FOREWORD



The interplay of rich natural resources and agro-climatic conditions make Odisha a major agrarian state. In 2020, COVID-19 adversely affected all unorganised sectors. A critical sector that was indispensable to the survival of the entire nation was agriculture. As agricultural workers bore the brunt of the pandemic, the impact on women farmers was far greater. Odisha being one of the more backward states of India, also faced significant challenges. Despite its critical contribution to the agricultural sector, the state's overall share towards the country's GDP has been fairly low. Lower still, has been its recognition of the contributions of women's work to the sector. Of the total female labour force participation in the state, 57.8 per cent are involved

HDFC Bank through its social initiative, HDFC Parivartan is working to create long-term value for the disadvantaged people of India by making them self-reliant and a contributor to national growth.



in agriculture. A majority of these are marginal workers. The backward status of the sector is largely due to the lack of infrastructure, underdeveloped farming practices and non-recognition of women, who are critical drivers of the industry.

HDFC Bank through its social initiative, HDFC Parivartan is working to create long-term value for the disadvantaged people of India by making them self-reliant and a contributor to national growth. Aligning with our vision to empower the most marginalised communities of India, HDFC and Oxfam India came together to implement an initiative called Project Utthan to strengthen capacities of women farmers in Odisha's farming communities. Utthan literally translates to "uplift". The aim of this initiative was to contribute towards the socio-economic empowerment of marginal communities by enhancing sustainable livelihood options and improving essential services through a women-centric approach, thus uplifting the lives of the many women farmers who have so far been an invisible contributor to the sector.

We identified Kalahandi district as an

appropriate region to implement this project. As more and more men migrate to cities for livelihood opportunities, the agricultural space in the region is increasingly becoming feminised. Despite this trend, women are still not being given recognition or ownership of the land they tirelessly tend to. Through interventions at various levels, we have established a sound model for broad and sustainable economic and social development of poor communities, especially women, dependent on agriculture and natural resources.

A hawk's eye view of the project reveals that in the first three years of the intervention, the annual family income of impacted households will increase by 40 per cent. I am personally overwhelmed by this and commit on behalf of my team that this figure will only grow in the years to come. I invite you to delve into the pages of this compendium and read about the stories of the many women we have impacted through our work and the support of HDFC Parivartan.

**Pankaj Anand**

Director, Programmes and Advocacy  
Oxfam India





## GOOD INSTITUTIONS, CREATED WITH VISION AND CONVICTION, ARE KEY TO SUSTAINABILITY



Good institutions, created with vision and conviction, are key to sustainability. Under Parivartan, HDFC Bank's CSR initiative, we reach out to communities and enable them to shift from a vicious cycle of poverty to a virtuous cycle of growth. We believe in the empowerment of local communities to attain self-reliance through sustainable livelihoods. The Holistic Rural Development Programme (HRDP) is a flagship programme of Parivartan and implemented by Oxfam India as our partner agency. This programme started with 17 villages in M.Rampur block in Odisha's Kalahandi District and touched the lives of hundreds of men, women and children from the families we worked with.

The project has brought about a comprehensive transformation in rural communities in multiple areas of livelihood enhancement and skill development, education, health, water and sanitation and financial literacy.



The mission of the HRDP is to develop an ecosystem for communities to help them grow and sustain. In this stint, the project has brought about a comprehensive transformation in rural communities in multiple areas of livelihood enhancement and skill development, education, health, water and sanitation and financial literacy.

We have reached 1815 women through 17 Women Farmers Groups with different kinds of initiatives such as goat rearing and backyard poultry farming to improve income, smart irrigation facilities to enhance the productivity of the farm land, the *panch phal—panch pariba* model to improve nutrition, refurbished schools to ensure that children are able to get back to school as soon as possible, and water filters to ensure that families have clean drinking water.

Further details of the project and the activities undertaken, including scale and statistics of beneficiaries appear in the booklet. However, here is where I would like to take an opportunity to mention the focused efforts put in to

ensure the project's sustainability. The awareness building efforts through wall paintings, VDC meetings, activities with the VDCs at strategic village locations, discussions with adolescent girls on sensitive topics related to women for boosting their self-esteem and confidence, various trainings to the CBOs, WSHGs, etc have been given special attention in this project and will surely go a long way in ensuring that the community stays motivated to sustain these efforts.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate the entire team who have been a part of this remarkable initiative. Special thanks to Oxfam India for their tireless support towards creating an impact in the lives of the community members through our CSR support. The joint effort of all the stakeholders involved has helped the programme accomplish twice the expected outcome with complete and efficient utilisation of allocated resources during the project period.

**Nusrat Pathan**  
Head CSR, HDFC Bank Ltd.



## ABOUT THE PROJECT



Oxfam India, with the support of HDFC Bank, is implementing Project Utthan. The project aims to empower the community in 17 villages of Madanpur Rampur block in Kalahandi district, Odisha. The programme emphasises on livelihood, education, health, natural resource management and financial literacy.

The basic idea of the project is to reach all households of these villages and work with women (marginal, small and landless farmers) through sustainable livelihood initiatives. In 2021, during September-October, several rounds of discussions were held with women members of Self Help Groups (SHGs), PRI members, frontline workers (ASHA, AWW) to form a Women Farmers Group (WFG) in each village. Once the women agreed, the group was formed.

The WFG was a core group that drew up a plan for providing activity-based livelihood with consent and according to the interest of the community. The emphasis was on resource-based activities. There is also a monitoring group, with PRI members and frontline workers as members; the group, as the name suggests, monitors the work of the WFG.

The WFG is further divided into sub-groups such as goat rearing, agriculture, poultry (individual) and nutrition garden (individual). "The landless women were included in the goat rearing group and provided training in goat rearing while the women with marginal farm land were provided with smart irrigation training to increase their production. The idea is to enhance their income by providing sustainable livelihood, improving the nutrition intake of their families, improving their confidence and empowering them to stand up against violence against women and girls," said Gurukalyan Nayak of Project Utthan.





## BETTER KIDDING

**GROUP: MAA DHUKURI CHHELI PALAN DAL (GOAT REARING GROUP)**

**VILLAGE: NUNPUR; PANCHAYAT: NUNPUR**

**BLOCK: MADANPUR RAMPUR; DISTRICT: KALAHANDI**

*(This story captures how landless women collectively take care of goats to increase their income for future needs)*



The goats are fed nutritious food inside their shed

Lalita Parabhoi, 32, is a landless farmer making ends meet by collecting non-timber forest products (NTFP) such as *Kendu*, *Sal*, *Siali* leaf, mushrooms, and *mahul*. Sometimes, she works as a seasonal labourer as well. Six years back, she purchased two goats to increase her family's income. "I had purchased two goats by taking a small loan from the village money lender, but it died within a few weeks. *Chheli palana ku nei mo bhitare dara basi jaithila*<sup>1</sup>," she said. But things are different now.

Today, Lalita is so much more confident with goat rearing. Thanks to the regular trainings, regular handholding and monitoring by the experts and community mobilisers of the Oxfam India and HDFC Bank project—Uttan.

Lalita, Rajani Rana, Rajabati Bag and Ranjita Rana belong to the Other Backward Castes (OBC) community and are among the 14 small and marginal farmers who are now members of a goat rearing group. The group was provided with 16 goats.

In December 2021, Women Farmer Groups (WFGs) were formed in 17 villages including Nunpur village. The Nunpur WFG selected the women farmers who would become a part of the goat rearing group. The first step of this project was socio-economic empowerment of landless and small farmers through

sustainable livelihood opportunities. In the first week of February, Satyabhama Barik, fondly known as 'Bina didi' by the villagers and selected as the community mobiliser for the project, held meetings with women to identify the best fit for the goat rearing group. Eleven women were selected.

"A few of them had prior experience in goat rearing while others did not. After a few interactions they agreed to take the training," recalls Bina didi. The training on goat rearing was given to ensure that the women are able to get a regular income. Then the women were trained by the Assistant Veterinary Surgeon (AVS) in their village. Some of the other women who had prior experience on goat rearing also helped in mentoring the others to take better care of the goats.

They were trained in building a goat-shed with proper air-ventilation, feeding goats and care practices such as deworming. They were asked to regularly coordinate with the Livestock Investor (LI) and the AVS. The members were also given first-aid training to take care of ailing goats. Once trained, the group was provided with 16 goats of the Black Bengal breed to rear.

The training was essential as it gave them the confidence to take care of the goats. Once the goats were given

<sup>1</sup> It instilled a fear within me for goat rearing

to the group, the work was divided. “We take the goats for grazing on a rotation basis. We give them soft green leaves and lukewarm water. Once they return from grazing, their bodies and mouths are cleaned. We have also collected Rs 200 from each member to buy nutritious powder and a mineral mixture, for better growth,” says 35-year-old Ranjita Rana.

When asked how their husbands supported them, Rajani is all smiles. “*Ama agyan mane ama chheli pain ghara toli deichant*<sup>2</sup>. They brought bamboo and other woods from the forest and built a shed to keep the goats so that they can get proper ventilation and space to move about.”

This particular goat shed is also different from other goat sheds in the village. For developing the goat sheds, Rs 6000 was required - which the group members contributed. “Whatever we learned in the training we are trying to implement it. They had told us to raise the platform so that the base of the

shed can be cleaned,” said Rajabati. She adds that they have already vaccinated their goats to keep them safe from any infection.

Since they got the goats i.e. in the space of six weeks, two goats had died. “To minimise the mortality rate, we have planned to vaccinate the other goats in the village too. Women in the village take both the Black Bengal variety and the local variety for grazing, so in order to protect the former, we mass vaccinate,” said Gurukalyan Nayak. For Project Utthan, Gurukalyan is responsible for agriculture and animal husbandry.

The women members have been provided with the contact details of the LI and AVS for any emergency requirements. The women are nurturing the goats so that they can sell their offspring in the future for a profit. “We are collecting *shubhabul* leaves, which are very nutritious for the goats,” chips in Ranjita. The women also do not sell the goat milk because they feel it is the “right of the goat kid” to drink. The women have collected Rs 2,000 each and bought five more goats as part of their contribution to goat rearing.

Gurukalyan explains why the group was given the hybrid variety when they have more knowledge about the indigenous variety — “The hybrid variety grows faster, looks better and gives birth to

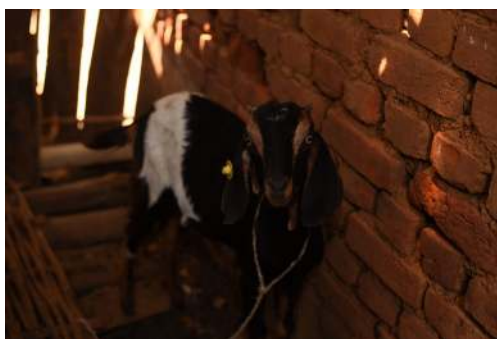


A newly built goat shed for the Black Bengal variety of goats

four kids in a year as compared to the indigenous variety. The women are convinced that it will give them better profit.”

The women have tried goat rearing in the past. A few years ago, Rajabati acquired five goats, which went on to become 15 goats. She intended to sell them to purchase a plot of land and build a house. However, three years ago, most of her goats died and she

was left with only five. The women were inspired by Rajabati to keep goats too but most of them couldn’t survive. “No one was there to handhold us and lend us support and neither were we trained to nurture the goat. But this time we are trained and are aware aware of its nutritional requirements and ways to minimise mortality,” sums up Rajabati while other group members agree in unison.



A Black Bengal hybrid variety goat inside the shed

<sup>2</sup> Our husbands have built goat shed for our goats





## MUSHROOMING BUSINESS

**GROUP: BARADA CHHATUCHASA (MUSHROOM) UNIT**

**VILLAGE: NUNPUR, PANCHAYAT: NUNPUR**

**BLOCK: MADANPUR RAMPUR, DISTRICT: KALAHANDI**

*(This story captures how women farmers started mushroom cultivation to increase their income)*



*A woman farmer is spreading polythene sheets on straw beds to prepare for mushroom cultivation*



*Women farmers of Barada mushroom unit are inspecting the growth of the mushrooms on straw beds*

Dipanjali Rana, 35, has a small farm and due to a scarcity of water, she cultivates paddy only during the Kharif season. For the rest of the year, her farm lies vacant and in order to meet the financial needs of her family, she works as a seasonal labourer. When she was selected to undertake the training on mushroom cultivation, she promptly agreed. It would, after all, help augment her income.

Kunti Rana, 29, (sitting next to Dipanjali) also says she agreed to take the training on mushroom cultivation as labour work was becoming tedious and difficult.

Five women joined the mushroom cultivation unit. Soon after the training, each member contributed Rs 1000 to build a shed and prepared the bed for mushroom cultivation. They also purchased a straw cutter, husk cleaner and sprinklers; this helped reduce drudgery. "We have fixed sprinklers to maintain the moisture level in the shed," chips in Gouri Rana, another member. The progress of work was closely

monitored by community mobilisers from Oxfam India. When the women members received training they were also provided with mushroom seeds, polythene, bleaching and limestone powder.

During Covid, it was very difficult for Kunti to get any labour contract work, though she did manage to get work through MGNREGS to make ends meet.

"I had tried mushroom cultivation in the past as well but I had no knowledge and there was no one to provide any support. Today I feel more confident. Moreover, now we are together and are supporting each other to increase our production," says Kunti.

And how did the husbands help? Gouri volunteers, happily. "They brought straw and bamboo to build the shed for mushroom cultivation. Also, they are happy that we do not have to toil in the scorching heat to support our family financially. In fact, now we are able to spend more time with our children."

The women in the unit went on to train 70 more farmers in mushroom cultivation. Though this started in March 2022, they have already started selling mushrooms in the market. The group has earned Rs 60,000 so far. "We didn't know mushroom cultivation is so profitable. We are selling in the market and if it is not sold, our children are getting nutritious food to eat," sums up Tamal Rana, another member from the group.



## GOAT - THE POOR (WO)MAN'S COW

**GROUP: MAA JANAKI GOAT REARING GROUP**

**VILLAGE: NUNPUR, PANCHAYAT: NUNPUR**

**BLOCK: MADANPUR RAMPUR, DISTRICT: KALAHANDI**

*(This story captures how landless and small women farmers are rearing goats for a sustainable livelihood and enhanced income)*



Members of the Maa Janaki Goat Rearing Group with one of their hybrid variety goats

Dushila, Hirabati and Rashmita are among the 11 members who opted for training in goat rearing, to create sustainable livelihood opportunities for themselves. A few months before (March 2021), things were quite different. “We are mostly landless and small farmers with 40-50 decimals of cultivable land. Since this is upland there is always water scarcity, making cultivation difficult. So, we cultivate paddy during Kharif season. During other seasons, we migrate to Madanpur Rampur and other blocks of Kalahandi to work in brick kilns to make ends meet,” says Rukha Jani - president of the Maa Janaki Goat Rearing Group. “The pandemic made it worse—there was no work available in nearby towns and we had to survive on rice, salt and pickle.”

When the Women’s Focus Group selected these landless and small women farmers to participate in the goat rearing training, all of them happily agreed. “In the training, we learned different aspects of goat rearing. The Assistant Veterinary Surgeon (AVS) who was training us said the herbivorous animal needs more special attention than other animals. We are caring for them like we would our own children,” smiles Rana, secretary of the group.

During the training, members were taught to take care of the Black Bengal goat - like how to keep them clean and what kind of leaves and nutritious food should be given to them. Developing a

goat shed cost Rs 12,000 - which the group contributed to. The trainees were also given basic information on first aid care for the goats. In the Utthan Project, the women could choose to purchase goats from the market directly, if they wished to. “Two women along with their husbands who had knowledge in selecting better quality goats did purchase them from the market,” informs Gurukalyan Nayak of Oxfam India.

The women farmers have now collected Rs 2,000 each—either from money lenders or extended relatives—to purchase five more goats. The women are confident that goat rearing will increase their income. Jagyaseni Rana says, “We will take care of the goats, they will give birth to kids who we will raise and eventually sell them in the market. “Hirabati, who was sitting next to her during our meeting said, “ We know it will take a couple of years, but within two years you will see grown up kids and by selling them, we will increase our income”.

The women members were provided with the contact numbers of the AVS and Livestock Inspector so that if there was any emergency they could immediately contact them. Besides, there is a resource centre now in the panchayat office where women of the village are made aware of the different government schemes that they can avail of. “We are definitely feeling more empowered and confident now,” says Dushila.





## SMART FARMING, A SMART LIVELIHOOD OPTION

**GROUP: MAA MANGALA WOMEN FARMERS GROUP**

**VILLAGE: NUNPUR, PANCHAYAT: NUNPUR**

**BLOCK: MADANPUR RAMPUR, DISTRICT: KALAHANDI**

*(This story captures how women farmers are taking up smart irrigation techniques to enhance productivity)*



*The members of the Maa Mangala Women Farmers Group*



*Maa Mangala Women Farmers group President Lata Rana presenting the vegetable cooler*

Anjali Majhi, a tribal farmer, has nearly four acres of cultivable land. But due to a scarcity of water, she used to cultivate only paddy during the Kharif season in one patch of land, while others lay vacant. Sashimukhi Jani, another tribal woman farmer has a similar story to share. She has nearly one and a half acres of land which she cultivates during monsoon season, due to scarcity of water the rest of the year. Not just these two, 11 other marginal women farmers of Nunpur village face the same problem; their dry yet cultivable lands are not connected with irrigation facilities.

The 13 women farmers (nine belong to Dalit communities and four from the Other Backward Classes) were selected by the Women Farmers Group (WFG) to provide information regarding smart irrigation practices. They were more than happy to join. As part of the project, women farmers were provided with technical knowhow in farming, preparing organic fertiliser (*jeevamrut*), using farm equipment that can reduce drudgery and finally, water management.

Souri Jani shares that she had nearly two and a half acres of cultivable land which were laying vacant until the training, after which she practiced smart irrigation on her farm. “We were provided with pump sets, pipes and sprinkler sets and given training and knowledge on water management. I cultivated brinjal, tomato, lady’s finger, different types of spinach, and other vegetables in my field. The field which used to lay barren, is now green,” says Souri, who is also the secretary of the group.

Kasturi Jani says, “Though almost all the women of her village work in the fields, the farm equipment were such that they add to the drudgery. The new farm equipment reduces drudgery, doesn’t make us tired and it simply means we can spend more time in the field without getting tired.”

The group was provided with a set of farm equipment comprising a hand weeder, hand cultivator, hand trowel, *khurpi*, trench hoe, rake weeder, bulb planter, bio-decomposer, hard plastic drum, rose can and garden rake. The farmers can use any of these tools or others like the pump set, pipes, sprayer and sprinkler for their farm.

“We know that nearly 70 per cent of women in India work in agriculture fields but due to a lack of women-friendly farm equipment, they devote more time and labour to finish their work. We trained them to handle farm equipment





*A woman farmer spraying organic pesticide in her vegetable farm land*

and implement it in their fields,” says Gurukalyan Nayak of Oxfam India. When asking Kasturi how she is managing with the new equipment, she replied with a radiant smile, *“Ebe aaau kasta nai lagbar didi<sup>3</sup>”*.

The farmers also emphasise on the use of *jeevamrut* and vermicompost in their agriculture fields. “We are preparing *jeevamrut* and using it in our fields. Though we have not shifted completely to organic, but our vegetables are now semi-organic and the growth is better than earlier,” says Lata Rana, another woman farmer and member of the group. As they are growing vegetables in their

farms, the nutritional intake of the family has also increased. “Earlier, we used to buy vegetables from the market to have it with rice and that depended on how much money we had, but today our children have a variety of food items in their daily diet,” adds Souri.

The group was also provided with an indigenous vegetable cold storage facility where they can store the vegetables for a week, if they are unable to sell them in the local market on the very same day. “The indigenous cold storage facility is definitely a boon for us. Earlier, if we were unable to sell our vegetables in the market, it would

rot and get spoilt due to a lack of cold storage. But now this has solved a very huge problem for us,” says Bhanumati Jani as she shows off the vegetables stored inside the cold storage for the last three days.

To prevent produce from going bad, earlier the farmers had to make distress sales. According to those working with the community, each individual farmer was losing 10-15 kg of their produce in a week. If a perishable item like tomato costs Rs 30, due to the absence of cold storage, they would suffer a loss between Rs 300 and 450.

She adds, “We are managing this cold storage as per the instructions and our training. The cold storage is double walled. We pour water in it and cover it with jute to maintain optimal temperature. This keeps it cool and keeps the vegetables fresh for days.

The husbands have started chipping in as well. Souri points towards her husband and says, “Look he is plucking lady’s finger now and tomorrow he will take these to sell in the market.”



*The new farm equipment has proved to be very convenient and accessible*

<sup>3</sup> Now there is no problem, sister





## POULTRY TO BOOST INCOME

**NAME: SARASWATI RANA AND LALITA RANA**

**VILLAGE: NUNPUR, PANCHAYAT: NUNPUR**

**BLOCK: MADANPUR RAMPUR, DISTRICT: KALAHANDI**

*(This story captures the story of two women farmers who are rearing country birds to increase their income and support their families)*



Saraswati Rana and Lalita Rana - the two stakeholders of the country bird farming initiative

Both Saraswati Rana (49) and Lalita Rana (38) have one and a half acres of cultivable land each. The marginal farmers cultivate paddy during Kharif season to feed their family but due to scarcity of water, their land lay vacant in the Rabi season. "Our husbands migrate to nearby towns to work as construction workers. But that is not sufficient to feed a 10-member family," says Saraswati, adding that to make ends meet, they also have to work as agricultural labourers in other fields.

around properly. Saraswati chips in, "My hens have now laid 12 eggs and we hope we can raise all the chickens".

When asked whether they would rather sell eggs or raise chickens, Saraswati promptly replies, "We will wait for the chickens to grow, then we can earn better money. Eggs are not profitable. Chickens have good demand in the market so after a few months I can earn better". They have built a coop for the hens in the backyard to keep them safe.

Both Saraswati and Lalita were supported with nine country birds each through the Utthan Project. They were also given training on poultry farming. "In the past, I had reared a few country birds in my backyard to support my family but due to a lack of required knowledge, I couldn't raise them



The country birds are a possible source of increased income for Saraswati and Lalita

properly and all of them eventually died," says Lalita. She adds that now with the training, handholding and regular monitoring by Bina *didi* (Satyabhama Barik), Oxfam India's community mobiliser, she feels very confident. For instance, during the training on backyard poultry farming, the farmers were trained on building properly ventilated coops and providing four feet of space for the hens to move

Saraswati adds, "During Covid, not only did we suffer, my children too couldn't join online classes since we did not have smart phones. If there is any emergency like Covid in the future, this backyard poultry will help me feed my family and when we expand our scope of work." She hopes that backyard poultry will help improve their financial condition substantially, one step at a time.



## BETTER GOAT MANAGEMENT YIELDS BETTER INCOME

**GROUP NAME: MAA TARINI GOAT REARING GROUP,  
VILLAGE: BANJAMUNDA, PANCHAYAT: MANIKERA  
BLOCK: MADANPUR RAMPUR, DISTRICT: KALAHANDI**

*(This story captures how landless and small landholder women farmers are rearing goats to enhance income)*



Women farmers checking their goats - every day after they return from grazing goats, they check them thoroughly

Bilashini Ghadei, 35, is a landless tribal woman from the Gond community. She, along with other women from Banjamunda village, which has a population of 145 people, migrates to Madanpur Rampur, Bhawanipatna and Bolangir to work as a seasonal labourer. On other days, she collects non-timber forest produce from nearby forests to meet the needs of the family. “We collect *tendu*, *sal*, *siali* leaves, *mahul*, *jhuna*, and honey to sell in the local *haat*. Besides, we also collect broom sticks to make brooms. Though this is enough to feed our family there is nothing in hand, as savings, for future needs,” says Bilashini. So when they were approached by Project Utthan members with the idea of taking up goat rearing, they were more than happy to participate. They agreed to attend the training on goat rearing.

The selected 16 women from the village were given 22 goats. Jhilli Patra, a member of the group, said, “We wanted to do something like goat rearing to increase our income, but we had no capital to invest. When Ganesh *dada* discussed goat rearing plans with us, we promptly agreed. Few members had some experience in goat rearing so we thought it will be helpful”. Ganesh *dada* or Ganesh Nayak is a community mobiliser with Oxfam India. The trainees were given basic information on specific nutritional requirements and first aid care for Black Bengal goats.

In fact, after the training, the women insisted on going to the market for the goat purchase. So three people from the community accompanied Oxfam India team members for the purchase. “When we bought the goats, we kept them in quarantine for 15 days. These goats were the Black Bengal variety; since they were foreign to our conditions, we kept them in quarantine otherwise they would get infected if they mingled with our goats,” says Kanak Patra.

While they underwent the training, their husbands built the goat shed. Building the goat shed cost Rs 9000, which the group contributed to. “We built the goat shed in a bigger space, the reason was that these goats will have proper ventilation and enough space so that they do not fight with each other. If a goat gets pregnant, we will separate it from the others so that it doesn’t get injured,” says Nepura Patra, another member of the group, adding that they graze the goats on a rotation basis.

In rural areas, women do all the household chores, work in agricultural fields and collect forest products for their family. So this sure looks like an additional task for the women. Malli Patra responds— “Though goat rearing is an addition to our existing work, we have divided our work and support each other as this will increase our income and provide a sustainable livelihood for us.” Apart from grazing duties, they also

collect soft green leaves and prepare nutritious food for the goats so that they grow healthy.

“We have already vaccinated our goats and will give them deworming tablets if any issue arises,” says Kanak. These women have been given the contact numbers of the Assistant Veterinary Surgeon and Livestock Inspector for any emergency.

Each member of the group has to give Rs 2000 as a contribution—this is to be used to procure more goats, as well as

to spend on the medical and nutritional requirement of the livestock. Each group has to purchase a minimum of 4-5 goats. Purchasing goats with their own money will give them a sense of ownership. The group has now acquired seven more goats. The women believe that goat rearing will enhance their income and they would not have to migrate to other places to earn a living. “When we migrate, we leave everything behind, house, village and children. But if we have sustainable livelihood means, we will not have to migrate in distress,” sums up Bilashini.



## GAINING CONFIDENCE THROUGH MUSHROOM CULTIVATION

**GROUP: MAA DURGA & MAA SARALA CHHATUCHASA (MUSHROOM) UNIT**

**VILLAGE: JAMBAHALI, PANCHAYAT: NUNPUR**

**BLOCK: MADANPUR RAMPUR, DISTRICT: KALAHANDI**

*(This story captures how mushroom cultivation increased their income and sustainability)*



Jambahali residents provided with in-depth training sessions on mushroom cultivation





*A group member preparing a straw bed for mushroom cultivation*

In March 2022, Reeta Rana and 11 other women of Jambahali village were selected to participate in mushroom cultivation training. This was the first time they were learning a different trade, other than their usual farm work. "I was curious as well as enthusiastic because I wanted to learn this trade to increase my family's income," says Reeta. The 30 year old was selected by the Women Farmers Group (WFG) of her village to learn mushroom cultivation.

Another member Gitanjali Rana, 32, explains that in most of the families in her village, men have migrated to other states for their livelihood. There is hardly any work opportunity available here. Before monsoon when they return, they

work in other's fields as farm labour. Women too work as farm labourers and collect minor forest products to manage family expenses. Some of the villagers also get work through MGNREGS but that is also not more than 35-50 days in a year. During Covid, most of the migrants returned to their village and there was no work available due to continuous lockdown. "There was no work, no wages and food scarcity at the individual level. Everyone was struggling to feed their family," chips in Debaki Rana, 30, another member of the group.

After Oxfam India's community mobiliser met and discussed this initiative, all 12 members eagerly opted for mushroom cultivation. "There is a demand for mushrooms in the Madanpur Rampur market and it grows in all seasons. So we thought we can cultivate and sell even during emergency situations," said Gitanjali. The 12 members split up into two groups — the Maa Durga and the Maa Sarala Chhatuchasa unit with 6 members in each.

The 12 members were jointly given two days of training on mushroom cultivation, technical knowhow, financial literacy, how to sell their products, and maintaining books. "At the training, the instructors taught us different aspects of mushroom cultivation through demonstrations. It helped us when we constructed our own unit and prepared mushroom beds," said

Bhumisuta Rana. After training, each group constructed one mushroom unit in Jambahali.

Post-training, the members were given mushroom seeds, polythene, and bleaching and limestone powder. "We watched the demonstrations very carefully and we were confident of preparing mushroom beds in our own unit," says Debaki, adding that they can now prepare 10 beds within an hour. Mushrooms take only 10-14 days to fully grow before it can be sold in the market. Buyers from Madanpur Rampur block are buying directly from the group. "Sometimes they buy mushrooms at a price of Rs 200 to Rs 250 per kg," she says. Debaki adds that not only has mushroom cultivation brought in extra income, it has also improved the nutrition intake, especially among children who love to eat the protein-rich mushroom.

On production and sale, Bhumisuta says, the first unit produced 43 kgs of mushroom from 80 mushroom beds while the other unit has produced



*Members of the mushroom cultivation group in conversation with community mobilisers*

35 kgs of mushroom from 60 beds. Till date, the first unit has earned Rs 8,500 while the second unit has earned Rs 6,400. "If we take all expenses into consideration, the profit is nearly 50 per cent," she confirms.

When asked about the changes in their own life after taking up mushroom cultivation, Sushila Rana says, "Our husbands started supporting our work as we are also supporting them financially. The villagers are also encouraging us and buying mushrooms from us. We feel confident and our bargaining power with other mushroom buyers has also increased".



## WATER FILTER FOR CLEAN WATER AND MORE

**VILLAGE: BANJAMUNDA, PANCHAYAT: MANIKERA  
BLOCK: MADANPUR RAMPUR, DISTRICT: KALAHANDI**

*(This story captures how setting up of Iron Removal Plant helps villagers to get clean drinking water and reducing drudgery)*



No more walking for miles to get clean water - courtesy of the water filter installation



A village woman cooling her face in the scorching heat - getting clean water was a distant dream for them during summer

Malli Patra, a Gond tribal woman of Banjamunda village was facing difficulties in providing clean drinking water to her family, especially her children. Though the water testing report by the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Department showed that the iron content in the water was slightly below the dangerous mark, women complained of bad odour and stomach ailments, especially among children. This meant that they had to travel some distance to collect clean drinking water.

"I did not know how I could get rid of the bad odour and taste in our drinking water. It was due to the high iron content. The cooking vessels used to turn yellow. Children were always complaining of stomach pain," says Malli.

This is not the only issue—the village

has four tube wells but Banjamunda is in upland so during summers, all the tube wells dry up. Women have to walk miles to a river bed where they dig *chuas* (small holes) to collect potable water.

Kunti Patra, another Gond woman, says that with all the household work, agriculture and forest product collection work, fetching water from far-off places adds to the daily drudgery, tiring them out. But with the setting up of the solar water filter, the pressure on women to collect water has reduced. Now the 35 families of Banjamunda are getting clean drinking water just by opening a tap. Not only has it ensured clean drinking water, it has saved their waiting time at tube wells as well.

The Iron Removal Plant (IRP) or water filter was set up at Banjamunda through



Project Utthan. “When we finalised the plan to set up the water filter for the villagers we decided to install it at the entrance of the village. Kalahandi is dry land and during summers, villagers as well as any one passing by face a lot of difficulty in getting drinking water to protect them from the scorching heat. Thus, by installing the water filter at the entrance, now passers by too can have access to water,” says Gurukalyan Nayak of Oxfam India.

The IRP has a capacity of 1000 litres of water which is sufficient to cater to the 145 people of Banjamunda village. “We have adopted indigenous systems to clean the iron contaminated water. The tube well water is filtered through sand and charcoal and stored in the tank,” says Jasiya Gamango of Oxfam India, overseeing the installation of water filters in the villages.

After installation of the water filter, women were trained to clean the tank and its surrounding. A Water User’s Group has been formed. It will collect Rs 50 from each household so that the money can be spent on any minor and major repairs. Besides, the youth have been trained to clean the solar panels at regular intervals as well as the water tank to ensure clean drinking water. “We have also installed a street light near the water filter, so that it is clearly visible at night to both villagers as well as commuters,” says Gurukalyan.

Kunti sums up, “Installation of the IRP water filter has reduced the daily drudgery of village women of collecting water during summer. Also, our children are now getting clean drinking water without any bad odour or bad taste”.



No more contaminated water - village residents and community mobilisers with the brand new water filter



## BOOSTING NUTRITION

**VILLAGE: BANJAMUNDA, PANCHAYAT: MANIKERA  
BLOCK: MADANPUR RAMPUR, DISTRICT: KALAHANDI**

*(This story captures the initiative where 23 women farmers are provided with saplings of fruits and vegetables which they can grow so as to include it in their daily diet to improve nutrition)*



A woman shading a plant from extreme heat during summer





A papaya plant

Kanak Patra agrees that because of a lack of variety in their daily diet, women, especially young women and adolescents in their village, look thin and anaemic. “The daily diet of our family is rice (received through PDS), tubers, spinach collected from the forest, and locally made pickle. We sometimes buy vegetables but that is not sufficient for the entire family.”

The fifth round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) reveals that two in every three children between six to 59 months are anaemic. Around 64.3 per cent pregnant women aged 15-49 years are anaemic as against 51 per cent during the last survey. Among non-pregnant women between 15-19 years, it has risen from 51 per cent in NFHS-4 to 65.5 per cent in NFHS-5. More young women in rural areas (66.3 per cent) are anaemic as compared to urban areas (61.4 per cent).

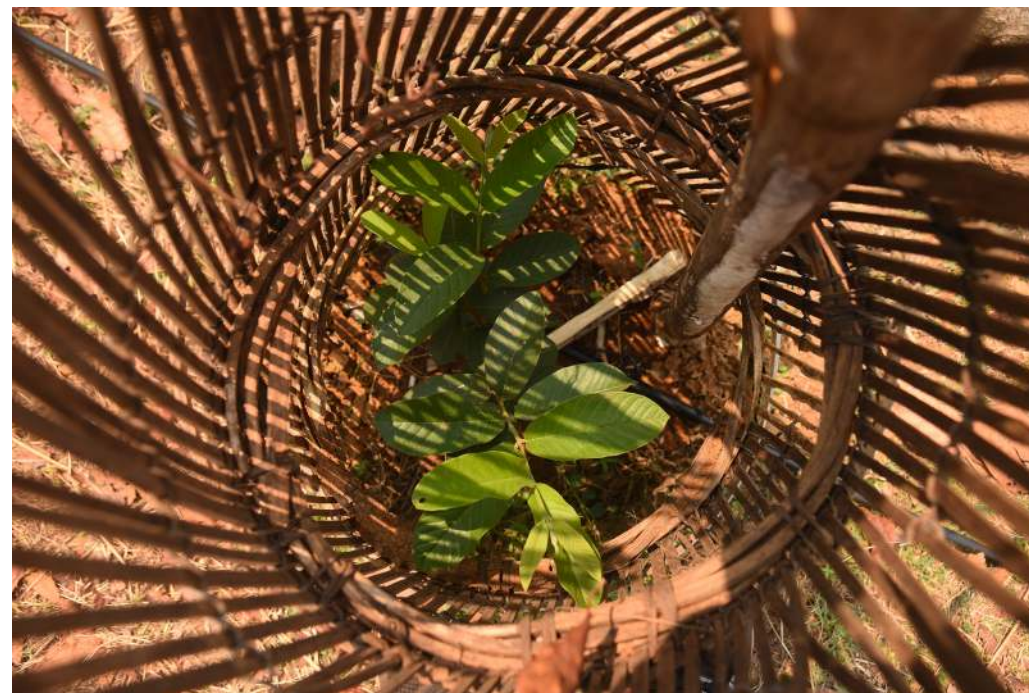
As an initiative to make up for these deficiencies, women have been provided with saplings of five fruits and five vegetables to grow in their

wasteland. This is the *Panch Phal—Panch Pariba* model under Project Utthan. “In our village, we only get mangoes during summers and a few seasonal forest fruits. But now we have received saplings of banana, lemon, pomegranate, guava and papaya, along with tomato, brinjal, drumstick (*moringa*), bitter gourd, cucumber, green chilly and lady’s finger,” says Jhilli Patra. She adds that they are taking care of these plants so that young women, pregnant and lactating mothers and children can get some variety in their daily diet.

The women are taking care of these plants - compost, cow dung, and other organic fertilisers for better growth are



A woman farmer taking care of a lemon tree by weeding grass from the soil for better growth



A fruit plant provided to the women farmers

regularly applied. “We water it daily. The wasteland which looked barren earlier now has plants. Once these plants grow into trees, it will make it green,” says Jhilli Patra, adding that this will also make up for the nutritional deficiencies.

The children in villages eat *chatua*, the nutritious powder provided through Anganwadi centres (AWCs). But with the closure of AWCs during Covid, children were deprived of *chatua*; later it was restarted but not on a regular basis.

“During Covid, our children were hardly getting any variety in their food and hence they weren’t eating enough. They had to be content with rice water and onion. In fact, adding lemon and tomato alone can make a difference. To fill their stomachs, we collect different types of tubers and greens from the forest. Now the vegetables and fruits from our village and tubers and greens from the forest will help improve nutritional levels,” says Champa Patra.





# HAPPY SCHOOLS

**SCHOOL: ARASKUPA UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**VILLAGE-ARASKUPA, PANCHAYAT: MANIKERA**  
**BLOCK: MADANPUR RAMPUR, DISTRICT: KALAHANDI**

*[This story captures how school renovation and innovative learning techniques have helped children come back to school after 17 months of closure due to Covid-induced lockdown]*



Assistant teacher Baikuntha Sahoo describing the solar system to the students of class 5-7



A Project Utthan painting on the side of the school building

Tanisha Pradhani and Kalpana Majhi were both surprised when they first entered their school after 17 months. Last time they were in school, they were both in class 3. “Now our school looks more beautiful and colourful than any other in the neighbouring villages. Earlier, we sat in a classroom with leaky roofs and faded walls but now everything has been changed,” says Kalpana. When asked what she liked best in the classroom, she promptly replied “the blackboard”. Earlier, the blackboard was faded and even cracked and chipped in several places. After repair, it looks like a brand new blackboard!

According to Judhistir Bag, the headmaster of Araskupa Upper Primary School, every year they received Rs 25,000 for the development of the school. The school, established in 1973, started deteriorating due to a lack of regular maintenance, whitewashing, colouring and repairing. One part of the school building was completely

damaged and not safe for students to enter. “I had informed about the dilapidated condition of that building to the Assistant Block Education Officer but no funds have been sanctioned yet.”

The recent renovations, as part of Project Utthan, have changed the scenario. Apart from the renovation of the school building, it has emphasised on WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) components, providing TLM (Teaching Learning Material) components, and beautification of the school surroundings. For renovations, Oxfam India took approval from the government.

When the state government announced the reopening of primary schools, many parents in the village were reluctant to send their children to school. Reason being the lack of proper WASH facilities in the school premises. The state government sanctioned Rs 750 per school for sanitisation, but that is not enough.

School Management Committee President Khirasagar Pradhani says, “In our school, we now have all the facilities which were either not available or were lying defunct. Children now have toilets



Water filter system inside the school campus





*A student using the brand new water facilities set up in the school*

with piped-water and proper drinking water facilities. When the Midday Meal (MDM) is served, children can clean their hands properly before and after having food”.

The school has 74 students (36 girls and 38 boys). Students from the Gond and Kondh communities and other vulnerable communities study in this school. The plan is to also provide the school with a library, a mini science lab, and some sports equipment. “This will help us to improve their learning ability with a holistic approach and this is

important, especially after the learning loss due to Covid,” says Baikuntha Sahoo, the assistant teacher of the school. He added since the school was renovated, it has seen 100 per cent attendance. The children who were completely out of studies due to a lack of smart phones and internet connectivity, had become reluctant towards continuing their studies. But the innovative learning techniques with the help of TLMs, and workshops to encourage students to return to studies have helped them overcome their fear and reluctance. They are now very eager to attend school regularly.

Kalyani Suna, a class 8 student, says earlier she used to take 5-7 days leave during periods but now it won’t be necessary. “The renovation work provided piped-water facility inside the toilet which is very helpful for us, especially when we get our periods.”



*Drinking water and hand wash arrangement for the students*



## SMART IRRIGATION

**GROUP: MAA DHARITRI MAHILA KRUSHAK GROUP**

**VILLAGE: SIRKIHEJU, PANCHAYAT: SINGHPUR**

**BLOCK: MADANPUR RAMPUR, DISTRICT: KALAHANDI**

*(This story captures how smart irrigation tools and techniques helped women farmers grow vegetables in their agriculture fields to increase income)*



*A woman farmer with her corn crop*





*A new and sustainable form of irrigation - the water sprinkler*

Jayanti Mahakud has 3.22 acres of agricultural land, but due to scarcity of water, she could only cultivate 1.5 acres during Kharif season. "In Kharif season we cultivate paddy but due to scarcity of water, we are unable to cultivate in Rabi season. Though we have sufficient cultivable land, we are forced to migrate because of the lack of irrigation facility," said Jayanti.

Like Jayanti, Rukmini Mahakud has 1.5 acres of cultivable land and due to scarcity of water, she is able to cultivate only a patch of her land i.e. 60 decimals. When they were selected to receive training on smart irrigation, all the women farmers readily agreed.

After the training on smart irrigation, the group was provided with a 1.5 hp

diesel pump, sprinkler set for one acre land, pipe, riser, sprinkler (irrigation pipe) nozzle, foot stand, etc. "At the training we learnt efficient water management and increasing yield using less water," says Jayanti. She adds that since the village is in upland, acres upon acres of land lay vacant due to a lack of irrigation facilities. Now with proper water facilities, they are able to cultivate pumpkin, cucumber, corn, *mung dal*, *jhudunga* or *barbatti*, onion, lady's finger, brinjal, and tomato in their backyard and on their farm land.

Earlier, the village ended up hiring a diesel pump set to water their fields but it was expensive. "They were charging Rs 150 per hour. But now whenever we need it, we borrow it from the group, use it and return it," says Manjulata Mahakud. She adds that they have to just handle it with care.

"The land which was lying barren is now looking more green. This could only be made possible due to the watering of the agriculture fields. The pump set is so handy we can carry it to our farm



*A woman farmer using organic pesticide on her crops*

land and return it within an hour," says Sita Mahakud. With water now easily available in their fields, they are able to grow different types of vegetables and provide their families with a variety of vegetables.

"Earlier we were buying vegetables from the market which we were unable to afford on a regular basis. Now, our children get leafy vegetables, both fried and curry, on the side with rice," smiles Jayanti. The women farmers have also decided to cultivate potatoes and sunflowers. "The only thing we want to buy is salt from the market. We should be able to grow everything else on our land," says Rukmini.

The Women Farmers Group were also provided with drudgery-reducing farm equipment. A study reveals that around 85 per cent of women in rural areas are engaged in the agriculture sector. These women, apart from ploughing, do all the other work ranging from weeding to sowing, which is backbreaking. Since



*A woman farmer with her sunflower crop*



*A woman farmer showing the organic fertilizer provided to them by Utthan Project to increase their yield*

the equipment used in farming was not women-friendly, they were provided with a hand trowel, *khurpi*, hand weeder, hand cultivator, trench hoe, garden rake and bulb planter through Project Utthan.

"This equipment is handy and takes less time in doing the farm work. By squatting in a comfortable position, we are able to do the farm work whereas earlier we had to bend for hours to do the farm work," says Jayanti.

The produce has started yielding a good income. They are cultivating both seasonal and off-season vegetables on eight acres of land. "Once we start getting more money, we will renovate our farm pond and start fish cultivation. This will give us better profit and nutrition for our family," sums up Jayanti.



## GOATS FOR BETTER LIVING

**GROUP: MAA BHIMABUDA GOAT REARING GROUP**

**VILLAGE: SIRKIHEJU, PANCHAYAT: SINGHPUR**

**BLOCK: MADANPUR RAMPUR, DISTRICT: KALAHANDI**

*(This story captures how landless women are rearing goats to increase their income level)*



*After a long day of grazing, goat rearing group members return home.*

Sabita Bhoi, 34, is a landless Dalit woman and every year her husband migrates for work to Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh or Gujarat between October and June as there is no work available in their village. She, in the absence of her husband, takes care of the family and works hard to earn to arrange food for them. “Many times I have to sleep on an empty stomach. Being a mother, you have to first feed your children. My husband migrates to work in brick kilns and construction sites. In his absence I am solely responsible for my family,” says Sabita.

Sabita makes ends meet by collecting non-timber forest produce and selling it in the local *haat*. This is not sufficient to feed the five member family, spend on their education and take care of other basic needs. So she took on additional work. “I work in agricultural fields as a labourer but that is also seasonal. Due to a scarcity of water we cannot get work during all seasons,” she adds. Purnabasi Bhoi has a similar story to share. Being landless, she shares how difficult it is for the women left behind to survive without anything in hand.

When Benupani Sahu, a community mobiliser at Oxfam India, discussed the idea of a goat rearing group they welcomed the proposal. The landless and small land holder women from 10 households formed the group. Two women from the group were selected to attend a training programme on goat

rearing at Manikera by the Assistant Veterinary Surgeon (AVS) and Livestock inspector (LI); later all 10 joined the training in their own village.

These women were provided with 15 Black Bengal breed goats. “Initially, we were facing difficulties with rearing this hybrid variety. The climate is warm and they are very delicate to handle. Later, after interacting with the LI and the AVS, we understood exactly how to take care of them,” says Purnabasi.

As most of the men in this village migrated to other states, the women built the goat sheds themselves. Sharing her work schedule, Nrupati Majhi says, “Three to four women from the village take the goats out for grazing on a rotation basis. They take all the goats—both hybrid and indigenous—to nearby forests. Our indigenous variety can venture into the forest and eat leaves but the hybrid variety needs more care. We bring soft and green leaves for them to one place where they eat. We also see whether the leaves are fresh and not pest-infested. The latter will prove very fatal for the goats.” She adds that despite their best efforts, three goats died.

Once the goats return from the forest, they are provided with vegetable peels and water, which was used to clean *mung* and *kolath* (pulses). “This water keeps their stomach cool in this scorching heat,” says Pira Majhi, another member



of the group. The women members have also been given a first-aid kit for their livestock.

After the training, the women were given the contact numbers of the AVS and the tLI so that they could be contacted directly in case of an emergency. Sharing an incident, Purnabasi says, "Once one of our goats developed an infection in

her lower jaw, we immediately contacted the AVS. We did exactly as we were told. Because we immediately cleaned the infection, she recovered".

The women are now waiting for their goats to deliver kids and for them to grow. They believe that goat rearing can certainly become a regular source of income for them.



## WOMEN FOR WOMEN

**VILLAGE: DHEKUNKUPA, PANCHAYAT: NUNPUR**

**BLOCK: MADANPUR RAMPUR, DISTRICT: KALAHANDI**

*(This story captures how the formation of the Women Farmers Group helps in providing a sustainable livelihood to landless and small women farmers)*



*A meeting between community mobilisers and the Dhekunkupa WFG*

Jagyaseni Patra, 36, a marginal woman farmer of Dhekunkupa village knows how women of her village manage their family with meagre incomes. The farmers who have 2-3 acres of cultivable land are unable to farm in their lands throughout the year due to a scarcity of irrigation facilities. The landless women work in others' agriculture fields, migrate for work as construction labourers and collect non-timber forest products to earn their livelihood.

The village which has 145 households with a population of 456, has eight Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Women members of these groups take loans from the SHGs whenever there is any financial requirement. Some women have also taken loans from the Odisha Livelihood Mission (OLM) to start their own businesses but couldn't be successful for various reasons. When Oxfam India's community mobiliser Jyotirmayee Dahal put forth a proposal of forming a Women Farmers Group (WFG), he received a mixed response—few of them agreed while others were indifferent.

"There are many NGOs that come, discuss and later wind up and leave so we were a little apprehensive towards this proposal," says Sushila Dhandia. After rounds of discussions and convincing the women of sustainable livelihood means, they agreed with the proposal.

"The WFG with 85 women as members

became the general body of the group. Advisory and monitoring groups were formed with ASHA, Anganwadi Workers, PRI members, Community Resource Persons (CRP) along with other women. The idea was to cover all women in the village and improve their income by providing them with sustainable livelihoods," says Jyotirmayee. The programme emphasised on livelihood, education, financial literacy, health and natural resource management. "Some programmes we continued with a collective approach while others were for individuals," says Jyotirmayee.

In Dhekunkupa village, there were three goat rearing groups, two agriculture groups; 29 women took up rearing country birds and 28 of them took up the *panchphal* (five fruits and five vegetables cultivation) model. "We formed these groups after discussing with the beneficiaries and knowing their interest in the trade. Once they agreed we formed the group. The most vulnerable such as the landless, single women, women with disabilities and widows were given priority," says Arati Dhandia, president of the Women Farmers Group.

When asked how different the WFG of Utthan Project is from other SHGs, Sushila says, "It emphasises on resource-based activities. Moreover, the WFG, while doing the planning, takes the interest and consent of women

into consideration. It prepares us with training, regular handholding and does the monitoring of our work".

When asked apart from providing livelihood options, what other support did the group extend to them, Jagyeni says, "if we find any domestic violence issue in our village, we women collectively reach out to the survivor, counsel the couple, especially the men

and other family members."

Citing an example, she says, one man disapproved of his wife joining the group, after which they collectively met with him and tried to convince him. He agreed and now the woman is an active member of the goat rearing group. "*Ame mahila mane sabu sukha dukkha re bi sathi heuchu. Nahele kiye ama katha bujhiba*,"<sup>4</sup> she concludes.



Community mobiliser Jyotirmayee Dahal in a discussion with the members of the WFG.

<sup>4</sup> We women are standing strongly with each other or else who will understand us





## GOAT REARING EMPOWERS LANDLESS WOMEN

**GROUP: GHARAMANI GOAT REARING GROUP**

**VILLAGE: DHEKUNKUPA, PANCHAYAT: NUNPUR**

**BLOCK: MADANPUR RAMPUR, DISTRICT: KALAHANDI**

*(This story captures how goat rearing helps landless and small women farmers to enhance their income)*



A woman farmer and her goats in the newly built goat shed

Emanti Bhoi and Allhadin Bhoi are two landless women of Dhekunkupa village who have experienced various hardships to make ends meet. While their husbands go out of the village to work as construction labourers, they collect forest products and sell it to support their family financially. During the pandemic, their situation worsened. Their husbands had no work in hand and they could not sell the forest produce as markets were closed due to the lockdown. “If we work, we earn and feed our family, but during Covid when there was no work available, it was also difficult for us to survive,” says Emanti.

Through Project Utthan, women like Emanti and Allhadin found income earning opportunities. “We wanted some livelihood opportunity so we could earn better and support our families. Though we could have taken loans from the SHGs but we also wanted training and handholding support so that we can do better in our venture,” says Kanak Bhoi, explaining why they agreed to be a part of the goat rearing group.

The 10-women team was given 15 goats; they were to add another five goats from their contribution as a part of the project. “We contributed Rs 2,000 each to purchase the goats so that we increase our scope for earning more,” says Santosini Bhoi.

“In the Madanpur Rampur block of Kalahandi district, the mortality rate of goats is higher than other parts of the district, thus we have planned to vaccinate all the goats (both the local variety and Black Bengal variety) to reduce the mortality rate first,” says Gurukalyan Nayak of Oxfam India.

The women take all the goats of the village together for grazing so there is every chance that these hybrid goats may get infected, so if all the goats will be vaccinated it will reduce the mortality rate. When asked what they learned from the goat rearing training, the women say the Assistant Veterinary Surgeon (AVS) has taught them everything about goat rearing. “*Peta batha thu arambha kari kana khuaiba o kemiti jatna neba sabu bishayare kahichanti*,”<sup>5</sup> says Mamata Dhondia.

The men in the village, the husbands especially, are very happy with the support received through Project Utthan. In fact, they chipped in as well—some went to the forest to collect bamboo sticks while others built sheds for the goats. “Just like the AVS taught us, we built the shed on a raised platform and made it big enough so that the goats have enough space inside the shed for movement,” says Santosini.

Now one of their goats has given birth to a kid and another one is pregnant.

<sup>5</sup> From stomach ache to what to feed, and how to care for the animal, everything he has taught us

“We keep the pregnant goats away from the group because there is every chance that they will get hurt,” she adds. The women are quite happy to see their efforts take shape now that other female goats have begun to deliver kids. They believe the goats will help them evade their present financial condition to some extent.



A woman farmer with a Black Bengal hybrid variety kid



# IMPROVED FARMING TECHNIQUES BETTERS YIELD

**GROUP: BAGBAHALI WOMEN AGRICULTURE GROUP**  
**VILLAGE: MANIKERA, PANCHAYAT: MANIKERA**  
**BLOCK: MADANPUR RAMPUR, DISTRICT: KALAHANDI**

*(This story captures how training in smart farming practices helped women farmers to increase their productivity)*



The farmers of Bagbahali Women Agriculture Group in Manikera Village



Bhumisuta Patra, 47, a Gond tribal woman has now cultivated onions in two acres of her cultivable land. She took to onion farming after attending a agriculture training under Project Utthan. She followed all the instructions given at the training. Before cultivation, she nurtured the soil with *jeevamrut* and vermicompost, and after that she sowed the onions in lines, a method she was taught in the training. "This helped me to get a better yield. Earlier, we used to sow in a traditional method so some onions would get pressed and reduce the overall yield," says Bhumisuta. This new line sowing method helped her to get an improved yield. And she hopes that this time the earnings will be better.



*A farmer examining her improved chilly crop*

The farmers in this village also face the problem of water scarcity, so except for monsoons (Kharif season) they are unable to cultivate in other seasons (Rabi season). "As we were unable to cultivate in Rabi season, our children were not getting sufficient vegetables to eat. How much vegetables can you buy from the market?" asks Gouri Dharua. Pointing to the land behind her house she says, "All this land lay vacant during other seasons". In addition, women groups were given drudgery-reducing farm equipment, along with containers for *jeevamrut* and vermicompost, and a diesel pump set, pipes and sprinkler.

The women are quite happy with the training in organic manure. "We women do most of the farm work including

spraying fertiliser and pesticides. Many don't know how dangerous it is. In fact, if someone is pregnant, she also has to do the spraying and it is harmful. But organic manure is not harmful," says Kalkati Patra. Gouri says that after using *jeevamrut* and vermicompost, their expenditure on fertilisers has reduced. Although they have not completely shifted to organic farming but they plan to do so in the next phase of the project. "This will be good for us as well as for our children," says Kalkati.

The land that lay vacant due to a lack of irrigation was cultivated using water drawn from the diesel pump set. "The pump set which we used to rent to draw

water for our land was very expensive. Now the pump set is with the group and whenever we require it, we use it to water the land. This year with the help of the pump set, we could cultivate a good number of vegetables. These vegetables have a better price in the

market and fetch us a better income. Also, our children now get nutritious food," says Agasti Dharua. The group has seen an approximate 7-12 per cent increase in productivity during the Rabi Season in 2021.



*The women farmers are happy with their new user-friendly farm equipment*



## FINDING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD

**GROUP: WOMEN FARMERS GROUP**

**VILLAGE: MANIKERA, PANCHAYAT: MANIKERA**

**BLOCK: MADANPUR RAMPUR, DISTRICT: KALAHANDI**

*(This story captures how women farmer groups help landless and small farmers to enhance their income levels)*



*Bharti Sharma (President of the WFG) and other WFG members in a meeting for building sustainable livelihoods*



*Community mobiliser Ganesh Nayak in a discussion with women farmers in Manikera*

When Belamati Patra and Bharati Sharma of Manikera village heard about an NGO proposing to start a project in the village, they opposed it. The reason—too many NGOs come to their village, discuss, motivate and after a few months wind up and leave. Community mobiliser Ganesh Nayak shared a plan for sustainable livelihood which was alluring and the women thought they could easily ‘fall prey to this scheme’. “We thought it is better to keep us away from the person,” laughs Bharti.

Ganesh also recalls that it took several meetings and many days to convince the women to form a group for sustainable livelihood. “They asked how different it was going to be from the Odisha Livelihood Mission and

other schemes launched by the state government. When they understood we were not giving them money, rather we are empowering them to select the livelihood of their choice, they agreed,” he shared.

After many discussions, the women agreed and then the Women Farmers Group (WFG) was formed comprising 80 women. “We included all the women from each household so that they can be a part of the livelihood opportunity and it will enhance their income,” says Ganesh.

In the village, 20 women (10 in each group) were trained in goat rearing, 11 women (6-5 in each group) trained in mushroom cultivation, 22 women (11 in each group) were given training in smart



irrigation techniques, and 30 women were given poultry training.

Apart from the core group, there are also executive committee members and advisory committee members to monitor the work of core committee members. The advisory committee includes frontline workers, PRI members, CRPs and primary school teachers. They also play a significant role in selecting the women members, holding discussions, and identifying the interests of the women.

Bharati shared that like other villages in Madanpur Rampur block, in this village too, male members of landless and small-land holder families migrate to Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. These workers work in brick

kilns, constructions sites and cotton factories. They live in poor conditions and often the wages are too less to send home as remittance. The women are left behind to work and feed their children. "Sometimes they have to depend on rice received through PDS, spinach and tuber from forests and locally made pickle. The children of landless women do not get vegetables on a regular basis because they simply cannot afford it," says Gunjan Bag, Secretary of the WFG.

Now the livelihood training has empowered these women and they feel that even in difficult times there will be some money to fall back on. "If everything goes well, we can save something for our future needs, which was earlier a dream for landless women like us," says Sarwani Karji.



## EVERY DROP COUNTS

**GROUP: BINAPANI AND DHARANI AGRICULTURE GROUP**

**VILLAGE: UPPER NUAGAON, PANCHAYAT: MANIKERA**

**BLOCK: MADANPUR RAMPUR, DISTRICT: KALAHANDI**

*(This story captures how training in water management helped women in the village to increase farm production)*



*A woman farmer setting the rain gun properly to water her crop*



Women farmers plucking tomatoes in their farm land

The two tribal women farmers Rajamani Pandara and Sudra Patra are happy that these days most of their farmlands are being cultivated, thanks to the diesel pump set and rain gun provided by Project Utthan. Earlier, due to scarcity of water, they were unable to cultivate most of the agriculture fields. To water a few acres they had to hire diesel pump sets, the water pipe used to be thick and a lot of water would get wasted. But the rain gun has changed the entire scenario. The villagers had never seen such equipment before. “*Eita bandhuk pari disuche, barsha bhalia laguchi, kindri kindri jhikuchi,*”<sup>6</sup> says Kaibarti Dharua.

The group was provided with a diesel pump set, pipe and rain gun, besides drudgery-reducing equipment. They were given training on water management, land preparation, *jeevamrut* and

vermicompost. “Earlier it used to take hours to water a one-acre farm land but now within a few hours, we can shower water all over the land. We just fit it and then return home. We save on labour charges as well,” says Banita Pandara.

Because they are able to water all of their farm land, which was earlier laying vacant, now they are cultivating different kinds of vegetables. “We are growing various types of vegetables such as - *jhudunga, mung*, cucumber, bitter gourd, brinjal, tomato, lady’s finger and different types of spinach. This helps our children to get a variety of vegetables and improve their nutrition,” says Kaibarti.

Due to the scarcity of water and lack of farming opportunities, the men would



Women farmers are adjusting the rain gun stand on the ground

migrate to other cities and states to work as construction labourers. Even the young men had started migrating but the new tools and techniques have helped change things for the better. The men and women work together in the fields. In fact, they need more hands on deck as they are now cultivating 15 acres of land as against the 4-5 acres they used

to work on. “Now we are farming on our entire land and throughout the year, so we need more hands. Our husbands have stopped migrating and we are all working in our farms. If we have better yield, it will fetch us a better income,” says Rajamani, adding that they can now have savings as well.



A discussion between community mobilisers and women farmers in Upper Nuagaon

<sup>6</sup> This looks like a gun, showering all over and little water is being used





## ABOUT HRDP



### A STEP TOWARDS TRANSFORMING RURAL COMMUNITIES

HDFC Bank's Parivartan aims to contribute to the social and economic development of the community by mainstreaming economically and socially challenged groups and drawing them in to the cycle of growth, development and empowerment. Parivartan connotes the changes brought through our various CSR initiatives such as the Holistic Rural Development Project (HRDP). We work to develop an ecosystem for communities to help them grow and sustain. The Bank, through various partnerships, is committed to identifying and supporting programmes that seek to develop and advance the community.

HRDP is one of the flagship programmes under HDFC Bank's Parivartan which aims to empower rural communities through a synchronised, strategic, participatory and sustainable approach. Under HRDP, the work is concentrated under five key focus areas – Skill Development, Livelihood Enhancement, Education, Natural Resource Management, Health, Water, Sanitation and Financial Inclusion.

HDFC Bank's CSR footprint in Odisha comprises 177 villages across 13 districts – Kalahandi, Ganjam, Jagatsinghpur, Nayagarh, Rayagada, Puri, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Bolangir, Korpaut, Nabarangpur, Kandhamal and Kendrapara, covering 48,225 households.

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## ABOUT OXFAM INDIA



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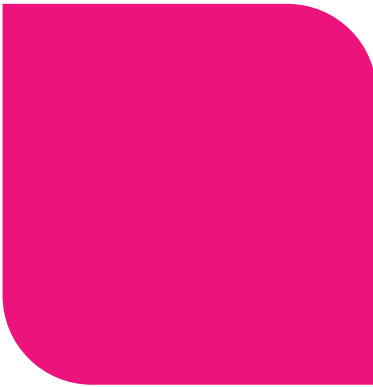
We work to ensure that Adivasis, Dalits, Muslims, Women & Girls, and Informal Sector Workers have violence free lives with freedom to speak their mind, equal opportunities to realise their rights, and a discrimination free future. We research to find lasting solutions to end rising inequalities and exclusion of marginalised communities from getting decent jobs, quality free education and healthcare. We campaign with the public to demand policy changes from governments for creating a just and inclusive country as envisioned in the Indian Constitution. We mobilise support to save, protect and rebuild lives of the poorest of poor

affected by crises and humanitarian disasters.


Oxfam has been in India since 1951. It first came to India to respond to the Bihar famine. In 2008, Oxfam India became an independent affiliate and an Indian NGO. Oxfam India is an autonomous Indian organisation and has staff and board members from within India. Oxfam India is a member of the global confederation of 21 Oxfams across the world. The Government of India has registered Oxfam India as a non-profit organisation under Section 8 of the Indian Companies Act, 2013. ([www.oxfamindia.org](http://www.oxfamindia.org))

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