



FROM MICRO BORROWERS TO ENTREPRENEURS

Case studies of Women Entrepreneurs Supported under the Program on Capacity Building for Livelihood Enhancement and Wealth Management leading to Women Empowerment



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Friends of Women's World Banking (FWWB) was established in the year 1981 with an objective of providing financial and capacity building services to organizations promoting livelihoods and self-reliance of poor women. It took up various initiatives to create access to financial services for women by combining credit and capacity building support. FWWB's current programs on Water and Sanitation, Solar Energy, Agriculture Financing and Women Entrepreneurship have evolved keeping in mind the needs of the women at the grass roots.

FWWB identified the opportunity to work with the partner organisations to expand their interventions towards supporting women entrepreneurs by providing them capacity building and initiated the Women Entrepreneurship Support Program (WES). The program aimed at providing capacity building support with an aim to help it take up women-owned micro to increase their financial access and independence by supporting in their livelihood activities and helping the enterprise become sustainable.

FWWB with the funding support from the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited, India (HSBC), began with a pilot project in the year 2014 with the Annapurna Mahila Multi State Credit Co-operative Society (Annapurna) based in Pune, Maharashtra. The learning from the program, its geography and culture provided inputs to enable the program to expand outreach, to fine-tune the intervention methodology and expand to other diversified geographies and work in various states in India. Further FWWB up-scaled the program interventions across three states of India i.e. Manipur, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra and implemented the Program on Capacity Building for Livelihood Enhancement and Wealth Management leading to Women Empowerment with the identified partner organisations spanning across two years (2015 - 2017). The objective was to provide a combined capacity building inputs on financial literacy, business management skills and effective governance to the women members engaged in livelihood activities.

The documentation is the impact of Program on Capacity Building for Livelihood Enhancement and Wealth Management leading to Women Empowerment in the lives of women and their households in the states of Rajasthan, Manipur, and Maharashtra. The real life stories presented here highlight the difference the WES program has made to the lives of women in their households, and in their livelihood activities. It is enlightening and encouraging to see how capacity building initiatives could create a deep impact on the quality of life of families. Their stories give an insight into the way they have benefitted, not only economically, but in other ways that have been empowering for them.

We would like to thank all the women members and the partner organizations i.e. Self-Reliant Initiatives through Joint Action (Srijan), Rajasthan, Chaitanya, Maharashtra, Chanura Microfin Manipur (CMM), Manipur and Volunteers for Village Development (VVD), Manipur for their support, time and contribution towards case study documentation. The training team consisting of Ankita Rawat, Alexis Muthiah, Meena Dhamecha led by Barkha Jolly did a commendable work and we acknowledge their hard work.

We would also like to acknowledge the continuous support from the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited, India (HSBC), for this program.

Vijayalakshmi Das
Chief Executive Officer
Friends of WWB, India
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PREFACE

During the last decade, women's entrepreneurship has been recognised as an important untapped source of economic growth. Women entrepreneurs contribute towards creating new jobs for themselves and other community members. Women owned enterprises contribute significantly to enhance livelihood options and provide avenues for income generation to marginalised families by leveraging the benefits of the market economy.

This entrepreneurship model enables progression of marginalised families by acquiring competence to manage and grow a business. However, this segment faces common barriers to their growth and success such as lack of access to affordable finance as well as little/no understanding of financial products and services coupled with poor financial education and skills gap in business management. Thus, a concurrent approach focused on both access to credit and capacity-building requirements of women members need to be taken-up.

Also in FWWB's experience while working with the women members of partner institutions it was observed that they have a strong potential to take up livelihood support activities. Although the women members get access to finance by the MFI/NGO, yet there is a strong need to encourage more women members to move from livelihood activities to small/medium business. This would not only require larger loan support but also capacity building support in the form of financial education and business skill building training to women.

There remains a strong need to create an entrepreneurial eco system which would enhance their capacities and provide better livelihood opportunities and access to financial needs. It is important to create an environment that encourages women groups to graduate from undertaking livelihood activities towards promoting enterprises. Women need a chance to start a business, work hard and make better lives.

It is in this context Friends of Women's World Banking, India with the support from Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd., India (HSBC) implemented the Program on Capacity Building for Livelihood Enhancement and Wealth Management leading to Women Empowerment.



The project was implemented in 3 states of India: Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Manipur working with 5 partner organisations.



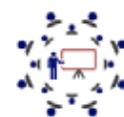
FWWB worked with 5 partner organisations across the 3 states. The combined efforts contributed towards successful implementation of



Financial Education and Business Management Skill training were imparted to 1882 women members. Also, the women leaders from 6



7528 indirect beneficiaries were reached out covering the households of the women members who participated in the capacity building



Training of Trainers (ToT) was provided to 42 Master Trainers identified from the community women members and staff of the



All the 1882 women members trained learned better financial planning and money management including techniques of saving,



The 460 women micro-entrepreneurs learned using various tools for better financial management of their businesses as well as household.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Friends of WWB, India (FWWB) with support from Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd., India (HSBC), collaborated with its partner organisations to expand its interventions towards supporting women entrepreneurs by providing them capacity building support on promoting financial education and livelihood enhancement.

FWWB in the year 2014-2015 successfully implemented a Pilot on Women Owned Micro Enterprise Support and Finance Program and later up scaled the program across 3 states during 2015-2017. This program applied "innovative approach" to reach out to 50 women entrepreneurs in pilot phase and subsequently around 1882 women entrepreneurs by providing capacity building support resulting in women members engaged in livelihood activities to graduate from micro borrowers to entrepreneurs.



Thoibi Devi
Langthabal Village, Imphal West District, Manipur

A VISION TO MOULD A BETTER FUTURE

Langthabal, Imphal is one of the most strikingly beautiful places in the state of Manipur. The ancient relics make Langthabal an important tourist attraction in Imphal. 80% of the population in this region is engaged in aluminium moulding work.

Thoibi Devi who is 47 years old, used to work in one of such shops and learnt the basic skills related to aluminium i.e. cutting, segregation, pressing etc. of aluminium before carving it into aluminium products. There are total 4 members in her family. Her husband was working as a school van driver. All the marketers of this sector were earning less profit because market opportunity had already reached its saturation point.

Instead of working as wage labourers, Thoibi Devi and her husband wanted to do some kind of business. They wanted to do such business which would be complementary to the Aluminium Moulding sector and where there would be few market players so that they would be earning more. She says, “For the people like us, making an investment in a business is a huge thing. We must have that futuristic vision so that our money does not go in vain. It’s better to invest where you see the opportunity and can make advantage as a first mover because opportunity doesn’t knock twice.”

Thoibi and her husband started Aluminium Scrap shop in the year 2005 by taking a loan of INR 7, 000 from a moneylender at the 8% p.m. interest rate. The business model in which they have invested was very good and profitable also, but the loan amount and its interest were so huge that they were not able to reap its benefits. She came to know about Chanura Microfin in the year 2010 by one of its ‘Karyakarta’. Understanding about the advantages of becoming a member of Chanura, Thoibi got associated with it and took its

first loan of INR 5, 000. After that, she didn’t have to pay those huge interest rates and thus she started earning a monthly profit of INR 30, 000.

Her business model is very simple. She provides the ready-made raw materials for the already crowded aluminium moulding sector. She buys scraps from almost ten scrap collectors. She has small tools like Press Hammer, metal cutter, driller etc. With all these hand tools, her husband and Thoibi make small bundles of pet metal scrap and sell them to brokers. Unavailability of transport was leading a loss of 20% of its income. But later in the year 2015, she bought a van for her business so that she could retain even that 20% of the income which she had to hand over to the brokers.

Chanura Microfin wanted to enhance the knowledge base of its women entrepreneur members so with the support of Friends of Women World Banking (FWWB), Ahmedabad, training on Financial and Business Management Skill was given to them in the year 2016.

Thoibi Devi also attended the both phases of training. She says, “Training proved to be very beneficial for me. I learnt about the different parameters that needed to be taken care of before starting any business. I learnt that market must be nearby your business so that one can easily sell their products. Customers’ need must be taken care of and income from the business must be invested into the business only and not for any different purposes. I have also learnt the importance of savings and insurance. People become wise with training and now I am a wiser person.” She smiles. At the end, she acknowledged by saying “Thank you for helping us to see the Bigger Picture before commencing any Business.”



Dwarka Bai
Ajetapurana Village, Bundi District, Rajasthan

A STORY OF THE SOLE BREAD WINNER

Life is all about believing that good things will come your way. It is about keeping up the fighting spirit and facing all odds valiantly. Dwarka Bai a Manihari (community traditional into selling bangle and other jewellery items) is one of such fighter hailing from Rajasthan.

Dwarka Bai is an imitation jewellery manufacturer and seller. She has primary level education and is in this business for last 25 years. She lives in a small village called Ajetapurana with a population of 2566 people. She is the only bread winner of the family.

After losing hope on her husband due with regards to earn a living for the family, she took charge of her house and thought to start working on her own. For this, she took a loan from the SHG formed by SRIJAN and bought raw materials from Delhi. Dwarka Bai took initiative started selling the jewellery in the local village. Gradually she learned from her experiences and came to know about different demands from the customers on varieties of things required in the household. She observed that people had to go to a different village to buy all those stuff. Hence grabbing the opportunity she bought the items which are frequently in demand and established herself in the MANIHARI business. She maintains the business accounts on her own but faced problems with the availability of time to maintain it regularly. She shared that, “Doing business is a challenge for a woman.” She had also contributed a big amount of money in building their family house and without family’s support; it was very difficult to proceed further.

While talking about the advantage of becoming entrepreneur she says “Because of my business I don’t have to spread hands in front of others for money.” Even though her income was low she managed to feed her family. Although she earned a good income, her profit was utilized for the household expenses and was unable to save money.

Dwarka Bai participated in the Financial Education, Business Management

Skill and Effective Governance training conducted by FWWB at Bundi. She learned during the training, that most of her money was used in transportation which had to be reduced. The only possible solution that came to her mind was to buy a second-hand car/van. Dwarka feels that due to lack of transportation services and frequent travelling which costs her more; she is not able to do her business in full fledged manner. And buying a car will help her to travel to different villages easily. Moreover, she can also have a shop set up in her car itself, this will also save her time to find a place and can manage her products easily. But she was not willing to take a huge amount of loan due to the fear of debt trap.

She raised a question for the same during the training as well. Dwarka asked, “How will I manage to pay the money every month, what if I missed one or two installments?” This is a common question that runs in everyone’s mind on losing an asset while trying to create an asset. From the discussion on pre and post borrowing, she learned that it was possible for her to take a loan but to pay the loan she had to increase her income sources as well.

In its response, she decided to diversify her business. She plans to start a soap making business enterprise along with other SHG group members. She has already learned the procedure and can teach the group members. Dwarka Bai says that she requires SRIJAN’s support for building network and linkages. She will be speaking to her group members for the same and will start the enterprise and sell the products in the nearby villages in the initial phase. And later with the help of SRIJAN, the group can expand the business.

Dwarka Bai is the face of many women that we see, the only bread winner of the family. Not only she has managed the family but also started her business and now aims to help the society at a large by starting a group enterprise in her village.

THE VICTORY OF PERSISTENCE



Manisha Kantabai Bora
Daund Village, Pune District, Maharashtra

It is the mind which wins and defeats. If our mind has decided to fight against failure then survival is the only hope and success is the only revenge.

Manisha Kantabai Bora is one such face of hope. She fought against all odds, survived and succeeded. Even after having faced such hardships, she says with a smile, “Education isn’t everything; experience too plays an important role. To keep walking ahead is a part of life”

Manisha Kantabai Bora is a resident of Daund village of Pune district and managed to get education till Class 10 despite her family’s dire financial condition. There are 4 members in her family and her husband is an auto driver. She works as a manager of Vasundhara Grameen Mahila Swayamsidhan Sangh on a payroll of INR 7,500 per month.

She opened a beauty parlor in the year 2009 by taking a loan of INR 15,000 from a village level ‘bachat gadh’ (savings group). In the initial stage of her business, she planned to provide home service facility to her customers as she didn’t have adequate funds to have a separate shop. As part of her planned business strategy, she didn’t charge any premium fees for the door step services to the customers. Later, with an aim of having multiple income sources she

ventured into the business of selling jewellery and cosmetics and managed to increase her daily income by INR 1000. With both these business venture, she was able to earn a profit of INR 4000-5000 during wedding season.

Manisha’s business grew and she started earning well but due to lack of proper money management and mismanagement of business cash flow she availed the loan of INR 2,00,000 and fell into a debt trap. Later during that year, she got managed to grab an employment opportunity as part of the District Parishad scheme and was somehow able to pay back a part of the loan. Her struggles were burdensome which led to dejection and she was close to the thought of shutting down all her businesses.

At this juncture, Chaitanya organisation became a ray of hope for her and encouraged her to concentrate on the beauty parlour enterprise. Her association with Chaitanya proved to be a ray of hope in her life.

She participated in the training program on Financial Education and Business Management Skill Development organised at Chaitanya, Pune conducted by Friends of Women’s World Banking (FWWB). The training participants included the identified women members from various Federations promoted by Chaitanya. Manisha participated in the training program organised during February 2017.

Manisha was filled with enthusiasm while she participated in the training program as she felt that any opportunity to learn shouldn’t be missed. While sharing her experience she shared, “Knowledge has no limit. If we stop

learning, we stop growing. I did a mistake by using my business profit for other unproductive purposes like building a house, birthday celebrations. I realised my mistake when I attended the training on Financial Education and Business Management Skills delivered by FWWB. I wish this training would have been given before so that I would not have fallen into the vicious circle of loan trap.”

Manisha with the zeal she has gained is determined to put new energy in her business. Now, she is confident at the same time cautious while making any financial decisions for business as well as household. She participates in the household financial-decision making process and her husband values her suggestions as she contributes towards building a house for the family. Manisha aspires to start a small scale Mahila Udyog and involve many other community women, enabling them to have a better living.



Leiyaphi Angkang
Chatric Khunou Village, Ukhrul District, Manipur

HAPPY WOMEN ARE THE SIGN OF A HAPPY FAMILY

Leyaphi Angkang is a 48 years old married woman from Chatric Khunou village of Kamjong block of Ukhrul district. In her family, there are total 3 members. Her husband is engaged in poultry and piggery farming. They earn a monthly income of INR 10,000 - 15,000 from the poultry and piggery farming business.

Their poultry business could not survive for a longer period due to increased competition and many suppliers. They faced financial difficulties as her husband was illiterate and they had no other source of earning. During that phase, she used her skills of weaving which she had learned from her mother in her childhood. She began with selling weaved clothes door to door for the survival of her family. From the meager savings earned from the weaving and poultry business, she opened a petty shop in the year 2008 near her locality.

After two years, Leiyaphi wanted to further expand her shop but due to insufficient funds was unable to execute her plans. At that moment through her neighbours, she came to know about VVD and the financial support they provide for the betterment of community members. She became the member of VVD after undertaking two days orientation training. She took her first loan of INR 10,000 in the year 2010 from VVD for expanding her business. Presently, her income from the shop is around INR 30,000.

Leiyaphi says “being a business woman I saw a lot of changes in my status. As I started contributing towards the household income, the financial stress was reduced. This led my husband to stop drinking and it’s a big achievement for me”.

Her continuous association with VVD led her to avail benefits of training programs on financial and business management skill. Also, she has been selected as the President of (SAMBU) Raiping Shanao Long Tangkhul Eastern area because of her strong communication skills and leadership quality.

She attended the business management skill training in two phases scheduled in April 2016 and 2017, conducted by Friends of Women World Banking (FWWB). While sharing her experience she says “I learned about record keeping, budget making and ways to increase savings, earlier I was able to save INR 200 - 300 rupees only but now I have been able to increase my savings by 40% on a monthly basis. Now I feel more confident and empowered.”

Leiyaphi has many more aspirations and is determined to achieve her dreams, “I believe that I can better organize things now when it comes to managing my finances; for this, all thanks goes to FWWB team.”



Wangkheimayum Indira Devi
Ghari village, Imphal West District, Manipur

I ADORNED MY LIFE WITH COPPER...

Yes, I have that magic and I can transform you into a beautiful Manipuri bride,” Indira Devi started laughing out louder which echoed the cemented roof of her house. 45 years old Wangkheimayum Indira Devi is a Snow White of Ghari village which is located in Patsoi Tehsil of Imphal West district in Manipur, India. She is a member of Ghari Awang Leikai Joint Liability Group (JLG) and is associated with Chanura Microfin Manipur (CMM) since 2010.

Indira Devi had started making jewellery when she was about 13 years old. While working as a trainee under the guidance of her aunt for almost three years, she carved herself into a fine jewellery designer. Indira Devi enjoys the process while she attaches the tiny metal pieces to stones and giving them a shape of a beautiful necklace.

Her fondness for the work is so much that even after getting married at the age of 25 years, she continued the jewellery making work and opened a small shop in the front courtyard of her house. Every month she buys the raw material of INR 5, 000 from the nearby wholesale market and monthly earns INR 14, 000. Initially, availability of capital was the major constraint for her business and because of insufficient capital she used to buy a very small quantity of raw materials and her monthly earnings were a meager INR 4, 000-5, 000.

She was mostly dependent on moneylender who used to charge interest at the rate of 5% monthly and gradually started facing financial crisis. At this juncture, she came to know about Chanura Microfin Manipur (CMM) and got associated with it in the year 2010. She took her first loan of INR 5, 000 and started buying the bulk amount of raw materials according to the market demand. This gradually led to improvement in their financial condition. Since she has been in the jewellery making market for many years, she has

been able to develop a strong network of suppliers as well as built linkages with customers. Also, she employs 2-3 support staff for designing the jewellery during the peak season to ensure timely delivery of the work orders.

Indira Devi is well aware of the strengths of the items she produces. She says, “The colour of my product is far better than the other jewellery makers. I use more adhesive than them which provides longer life to my jewellery. I have also trained 3 - 4 people who are now independently working as a jewellery maker and earn well. I am happy that my knowledge has helped to generate livelihood for others too”.

Chanura Microfin Manipur (CMM) wanted to enhance the knowledge base of their women entrepreneur members so with the support of Friends of Women World Banking (FWWB), Ahmedabad, training on Financial Education and Business Management Skill was provided to the women members. Indira Devi also attended the training in the month of January 2017. She says, “After attending the FWWB training, I have opened my bank account and started saving money. I have taken life insurance too and I think this kind of training should be given at regular intervals so that we can imbibe the facts very well.”

While wrapping a beautiful necklace around her daughter’s neck she shared that “I aspire to own a jewellery shop and want to become a trader for jewellery items. This is so because after getting older I won’t be able to see properly so I won’t be able to design the best quality jewellery. But I still want to continue being connected with the jewellery market and this shop will help me remain associated with it. I am excited to learn more aspect of managing my business better.”



Yashoda Chauhan
Lakheri Village, Bundi District, Rajasthan

RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

Yashoda Chauhan is a living example of how one can keep fighting their failures and pave a path towards success. Forty-two years old Yashoda has been married for 15 years and lives with her husband in the Lakheri village of Bundi district in Rajasthan.

She said “my husband and I put up with the financial problems for many years. We were looking out for a better way to earn some more money and meet the basic family needs”.

It was at this time that Srijan initiated their activities in their village, and motivated women to form a Samuh (Self Help Group-SHG) to enhance their family’s growth. Yashoda joined the ‘Maa Saraswati Samuh’ in the year 2014. Continuous association with the SHG led Yashoda and other Samuh members to avail benefits of the training undertaken in value addition of soya-bean from a recognised Institute of Bhopal. This led Yashoda to soon begin her first business venture.

She added, that as the consumption of soya was comparatively less in the region, they started preparing by-products like soya-bean snacks, soya cake and soya butter etc. The demand for these products increased in the local market and gradually they started selling across other villages of Rajasthan under the brand name of “Samriddhi soya food products”. Yashoda says “presently 10 to 15 women members are part of this livelihood activity as a source of income generation”.

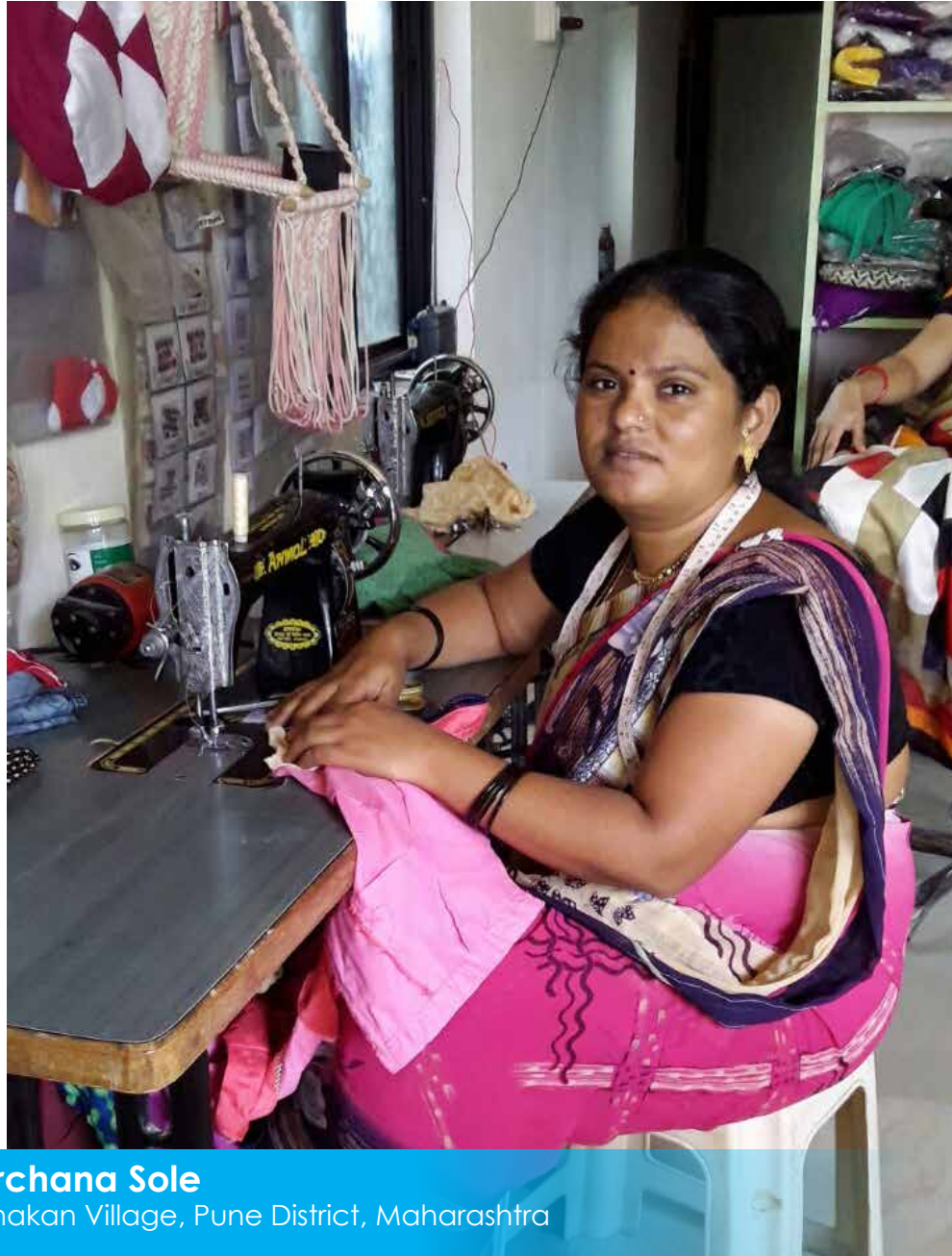
However, she was constantly brooding about how to market their soya processed products outside the village and expanding into larger markets. She was aware that the product demand was high due to its nutritious

benefits. Therefore, to meet up the challenge of packaging and marketing the products, she along with other women members received training on Business Management skills from FWFB.

Yashoda shared her experience of training undertaken by FWFB and said, “Through the training I have learned about the importance of product marketing, developing an understanding of the concepts of packaging, branding and inculcating negotiation skills to better negotiate with the traders and dealers. All the components taught in the training were quite beneficial to run the business.”

Post the training, as a step towards building market linkages, Yashoda along with other group members participated in food fair exhibitions to showcase the soya products across various states. Yashoda gleefully said, “the business has benefitted me, not only economically but have also empowered me.” The Federation provided support to establish a unit and also provided credit support to buy a machine of INR 4 lakhs so that larger number of women members can be involved leading to increased production of soya products.

Now, she is optimistic of saving enough money for her family and is proud to have achieved this feat, being a woman. Her future plan is to earn more money and lead a comfortable life with her children. Yashoda has many aspirations and is determined to achieve something bigger, which can be seen in the twinkle of her eyes when she says that- “we would market our own products across India so that we would be able to include all those women who desire to be autonomous in their works!”



Archana Sole

Chakan Village, Pune District, Maharashtra

STITCHING A NEW IDENTITY FOR HERSELF

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams. Very few have the power to make those dreams come true and this is because they never stop believing in themselves. This story portrays one of such believer named Archana Sole who lives in Chakan village of Pune district in Maharashtra.

Archana Sole is associated with Chaitanya, Pune for the past 11 years and is a member of Saraswati Mahila Sangh (Self Help Group - SHG) as well as the Padhadhikari (official) of the Federation promoted by Chaitanya. She got married in the year 2003 and was living a happy married life in a joint family of 13 members. In a sad turn of events, she lost her husband in the year 2011 and her widowhood made her a pariah in the conservative community she was married into.

Archana Sole with her perseverance and courage turned her fate around and carved a new identity for herself as a tailoring master in her village and set-up a small scale tailoring business. She bought two sewing machines of INR 2, 500 and INR 5, 000 each by taking a

loan from bachat gadh (Saraswati Mahila Sang) and repaid the loan within the duration of one year. Later, her association with the Mahila Sang encouraged her to pursue her degree that was left incomplete post her marriage; and graduated in the year 2016.

During the initial phase of her business, she charged a meager amount of INR 500 for imparting the training on tailoring skill to other village women who wanted to learn tailoring. Steadily she built upon a strong customer base in her locality and due to her better quality of work she increased her garment stitching charges to INR 700 –INR 1,000. Archana's tailoring skills augmented with her marketing strategies, improved her business resulting in a monthly income of INR 15,000. Whenever she receives a bigger order especially during the wedding season, she outsources part of the work to the community members she had earlier imparted the tailoring skills. This planned strategy helps her to fulfill her business commitments on time as well as increased in her income up to INR 25,000 – INR 30,000.

As any entrepreneurs, she too faced many obstacles to run her business. One of the challenges she faced was of delayed delivery of raw material coupled with higher rates. The members of her group provided her information of the

wholesale market located in Pimpari village, where all the tailoring material could be purchased in bulk at a discounted rate of 30%. This guidance helped her to reduce her cost of production, thus leading to increase in profit margins.

To enhance the business management skills of their women members, Chaitanya identified Archana for participating in the Business Management Skill training undertaken by Friends of Women's World Banking (FWWB) conducted on 25th - 26th May 2017. During the training, she learned about the various business management aspects essential for running a business effectively and efficiently. She shared that, "the session on preparing the business plan of our own business gave me a lot of insights about the details I overlooked earlier. These learning will enable me to plan better for my business activity. Also, the session on the importance of digital banking brought to my knowledge the convenience we get by using ATM while withdrawing money."

While working as a leader and team manager with Chaitanya, she feels empowered as she also enables other community women to strive towards improving their social and economic status. Archana proudly stated that "I not only train women to be tailors but also contribute towards creating a cadre of financially independent women."



Peimila Kengoo
Kachai Village, Ukhrul District, Manipur

BUILDING A SISTERHOOD OF EMPOWERMENT

Peimila Kengoo is a 51 years old married woman, from Kachai village of Ukhrul district. She is a graduate of Bachelor of Theology (BTh). Her husband runs an orphanage called “Spring of Hope” for handicapped children and widow women.

Since childhood, she had an inclination towards weaving and making handicrafts products, which she had learned from her mother. In 1988, she joined an association named Tangkhul Theological Association to learn the art of weaving. She continued being part of the association after marriage but after the birth of her children, she left the association in 2007 with the inspiration of running a handloom business of her own. She gradually started participating in her husband’s orphanage activities and simultaneously started devoting time for weaving winter clothes like sweater, shawl, caps, etc. to save little money for the start up of her own handloom business. Due to insufficient funds, she was not able to purchase loom for weaving traditional clothes for man and women.

During this financial crisis, one of her friends told her about

the organisation Volunteers for Village Development (VVD). With a ray of hope, she visited VVD office and gained insights of their financial support component and decided to be a part of the groups created by VVD in the year 2012. After being a part of VVD she took her first loan of INR 10,000/- and added her own savings to buy a weaving loom to start her own enterprise. This was the first step towards her business venture.

Peimila shares that during her initial stage of business she helped two widow women by teaching them weaving skills with a strong belief that “skill of weaving works as a weapon for women empowerment”. At present, she has 18 staffs in her trading unit which includes 12 weavers, 1 Sale staff, 2 tailors, 1 embroidery worker and 2 helpers. She has hired all the staff members from nearby villages, especially who are economically unstable to earn and equally divides the profit margins among her staff. She is able to earn a monthly income of around 30 - 40 thousand depending upon the seasons of festivals and marriages. She has been part of VVD for almost 5 years and acknowledges that without the financial support from VVD; her dream of having a handloom unit could never be possible.

In May 2017 she attended the training of Business Management Skills

training from FWWB. She said that “I learned about various components of running a business unit like understanding the business cycle, preparing cash flow and all the group exercises. I have also started maintaining the budget for my household as well as business. I now record each day transactions by segregating the personal expenses from business expenses with the help of the Daily Diary.”

She feels thankful to FWWB for teaching her money management and is happy with the little increment in her income and savings. She now feels more confident and empowered and further strives to expand her business by building linkages with different organizations. She wants to create more employment opportunities for underprivileged women in future by opening her own training center.



Devi Bai Bhimaram
Bothara Village, Pali District, Rajasthan

DIVERSIFYING INCOME FOR GREATER PROSPERITY

Devi Bai Bhimaram, a multi-tasker 55 years old woman, from Bothara village of Pali district in Rajasthan. She has a family of 6 members and her husband is involved in construction work.

After her marriage, she saw the women members involved in the work of goat rearing and selling it to Nana block of Pali district. She started managing the goat rearing livelihood activity independently which was earlier managed by her husband. The selling of the goats is done once a year, buyers from Nana visits the village to the households involved in the goat rearing business and purchase the goats. The transaction is executed which involves both barter as well as remuneration. Currently, she has 15 goats, through which she is able to earn INR 34,000/- per annum.

She has been part of the Bothara Bawsi Samuh (SHG) since 2012 and has managed to save INR 5,000. Srijan organisation supported her and involved Devi Bai to form more SHGs in her village. Continued association with Srijan led her to gain knowledge on earning more profits from goat rearing business.

In 2015, with credit support from Srijan, she purchased the technical equipments and started the business of renting and playing sound system in marriages and other social functions. She charges INR 2,000/- per function and manages to get orders for about 6-7 times a year.

In the year 2017, she started working as the Community Resource Person (CRP). Seeing her involvement and participation during the training programs of SHGs, she has been selected as a CRP who is primarily involved in training other women members by forming SHG groups. Devibai says “she trains the women about benefits of having membership in SHG’s, to save more and about group loan and all this happened because of her regularity during training programs.” She learned better communication skills, doing her signature and also business management skills for the smooth functioning of her business.

In May 2017 she got training from FWFB on Financial and Business Management skills and learned the importance of having a bank account, digital banking, using ATMs and budgeting. She liked the budget making exercise. As she is involved in so many livelihood activities, budgeting helps to make proper provisions for all her various livelihood activities enabling her to better manage the expenses.

In future, she plans to take a loan from the federation to open a tailoring shop for her son, who currently operates from their home. She said that “From what I have learned during the training, I am determined to save a part of my income on daily basis by cutting the unnecessary expenses to achieve my dream of opening a shop for my son and see him growing to greater heights.”



Mangal Katariya
Naravane Village, Satara District, Maharashtra

A BEACON OF HOPE, A VOICE OF REASON

Every success story is a tale of constant adaptation, revision, and change. If one wants constant success then they must change their conduct with time. Mangal Katariya, who is a resident of Naravane village of Satara district is someone who has mastered this art. She was born in an entrepreneurial family where mostly all the members were engaged in small-scale businesses. Her parents owned a grocery shop and she fondly remembers spending her evenings at the grocery shop. She has been a member of Swamikrupa Pragati Mahila Sangh (SHG) for twenty years and got associated with Chaitanya, Pune in the year 2013.

At the tender age of 13 years, she was married in the joint family where her husband works as an intermediary between the suppliers of fresh cow dung and fertilizer manufacturers by providing transport facilities. Mangal's family faced financial crises after they separated from the rest of the family due to disputes. To overcome this situation, she started a tailoring shop with INR 1000 independently. However, her husband doubted her capabilities and wasn't supportive of her business venture. He wanted her to fully devote her time towards her household responsibilities.

The income that she earned from the tailoring business wasn't sufficient for the survival of the family. Not giving in to the hardships she thought of increasing the sources of income and thus started a small shop where she used to sell cigarettes, chana (roasted chickpeas), and vada-pao (fast food). For this, her husband supported her with the initial capital of INR 50, 000

from which she managed to earn a daily profit of INR 100-200 daily. This business initiative was running successfully for a couple of years until a local thug started threatening and intimidating them to shut down their shop.

Mangal wasn't the kind of women who would accept a defeat easily and hence with vigour, she started another grocery store in the year 2000. Soon, she added a different product line of stationery items and ready-made cloth after she identified that there was a gap in demand and supply due to an unfulfilled demand for these goods in the local market.

Mangal participated in the first and second phase of the Business Management Skills Training on 14th-15th February 2017 and 24th – 25th May 2017 respectively. She says, "I have learned how to use the ATM and I promise to make it a habit. The training has helped me to understand that market linkage is very important for any business. After attending the training on Business Management skill, I contacted two different suppliers and utilized the negotiation skills to get a competitive price while buying raw materials worth INR 2,900. And this is how I was able to sort out my problems and managed to diversify my new product line."

Walking the road with Chaitanya and FWFB has developed a sense of self-confidence in raising a voice against social evils and now she feels so empowered that she aspires to diversify her business and desires to open a beauty parlour in the near future.



Meera Bai

Keshavpura Village, Pratapgarh District, Rajasthan

CHALLENGING ODDS: AN ENTREPRENEUR IN THE MAKING

“Once you believe that you can do something, there is not a single person in the universe who can convince you otherwise.” This quote is being proved by Meera Bai.

Meera Bai, a farmer with no formal education, along with her husband and two children stay at Keshavpura village of Pratapgarh district, Rajasthan. Meera Bai is concerned about her future and gets worried as it looks bleak because her income from her farming and animal husbandry work is not adequate for her household expenses and child’s education. Initially, she was shy while talking to people but her participation in the SHG formed by Srijan has given her confidence to interact with other community members. She recalls that earlier she didn’t even know how to hold a pen. After being part of the group, the other members taught her to write her name which made her feel empowered. She always dreamt of having her own small enterprise but due to her own fears and lack of entrepreneurial skills she was reluctant to take-up any business activity.

She recalls that she undertook the training from FWFB during 2016 and learned about the success stories of different entrepreneurs during the business management skill training. She was able to relate herself with the stories of women entrepreneurs in other states and the struggles and challenges they

faced to become a business entrepreneur. Meera Bai says, “I am amazed by the examples shared by the FWFB trainers where the woman started her nursery along with farming and she too was illiterate like me.” Post, receiving the training she has decided to start her own flour mill. She plans to take a loan from her SHG group and commence her work with mentoring support from Srijan staff. Meera Bai fathomed that having multiple sources of income is requisite; hence, she has separated a small space from her land for gardening of fruits and planted 40 guava seeds and further plans to grow mango, pomegranate, and papaya. She is a little skeptic about this as it is her first attempt. Meera Bai feels that with this activity will lead to increase in her earnings and further help her to increase her savings. She will no longer have to go for daily wage work in different cities and be dependent on the labour work income which by nature was irregular and inadequate for her family.

Meera Bai says “I never thought that I can be a business woman, I didn’t even know how to hold a pen too but can write my name now; we have to take a leap of faith for success and this training has aroused that faith in me. I feel very joyful that I will be able to provide better education to my children and can foresee a better future for my children.”



Rinchula Ragui
Awon tang Village, Ukhrul District, Manipur

AN INSPIRING ENTREPRENEUR'S JOURNEY

Rinchula Ragui, a qualified graduate of Business Administration (B.A) and a true entrepreneur is engaged in multiple activities like weaving, running a grocery shop and poultry. She is a 37-year-old woman from Awotang block of Ukhrul district. Her husband is a salaried employee.

She married into a joint family and realized that her husband's income is not adequate to fulfill the needs of her family. To overcome this situation, she utilised her skills of weaving which she had learned during her childhood and began weaving sweaters, shawls, and caps and sold it in the neighborhood, from which she earned around 4,000 - 5,000 rupees monthly.

However, the income was not sufficient for her family to sustain, so she ventured into food processing business. From her savings, she bought fruits on a seasonal basis, which she further processed and packaged at her household level. During offseason, she used to sell these processed items by preparing candies, jams, and pickles at a premium price. The demand gradually started increasing and she further pursued to expand this business but faced challenges due to nonavailability of sufficient fund.

During this phase of her life, Rinchula got to know about VVD through her local community women. In 2015, she became a member of VVD and availed her first loan of INR 15,000 to further expand her business of food processing. Soon she increased her product range adding different product

variations including ice creams, chocolates, etc. Her monthly income from this particular business currently is INR 25,000. Gradually, she converted her small shop into a grocery outlet. Her progress and success being an entrepreneur made a positive change in her socio-economic status. Rinchula says "Now my neighbors also want to start similar business like me"

Continuous association with VVD and subsequently participating in the training undertaken by FWFB has benefited her to have a better life for herself as well as her family. She participated in the training programs conducted by Friends of WWB, India during April 2016 and 2017. Rinchula says "I got new knowledge about the various business skills like different ways to earn more profit margins in business, an idea of promoting the business, budget making, and savings per day to fulfill future dreams. After attending training from FWFB, I am able to earn more in my business." She shared that the business has not only benefitted her economically but have also empowered her. Now she can bravely deal with any situation whether it is related to family, neighbor or business hardships. She believes that she is now better organized when it comes to managing her finances.

Walking the path along with support from VVD and FWFB has developed a sense of self-confidence in her. She is proud that being a woman, she has managed this feat. Her future plan is to earn more money and lead a comfortable life with her children.



Chingangbam Bilashini Devi
Wangkhei village, Imphal East District, Manipur

WEAVING THE PATH TO EMPOWERMENT

“I stopped selling door to door as it was better to stay hungry than to be called as a beggar. But I was not a beggar but a trader. Now the scenario has changed,” Chingangbam Bilashini Devi was smiling through the tears after commenting this.

56 years old, Chingangbam Bilashini Devi, a wife of Chingangbam Nogen Singh is a resident of Wangkhei village which is known for the hand woven clothes. She is a member of Wangkhei Wangkheimayum Leirak Joint Liability Group (JLG) since 2009. Her association with Chanura Microfin has now turned up to almost 8 years. There is a total of 7 members in her family. Bilashini got married in the year 1980 and just after five years of her marriage, her husband met with an accident. Since then Bilashini became the sole earner of her family.

Initially, she herself used to weave the clothes but since she had never got any formal training in clothes weaving, the throughput rate was less. The income was not sufficient for her survival so she then worked as a seller on the shop of others. She started earning INR 4,000 p.m. as a seller but still she was not able to save anything for her future aspirations which were basically giving a better and a higher education to her children. She heard about Chanura Microfin by one of her friend who is also a member of this organization and is living a prosperous life. Bilashini Devi after being associated with Chanura took her first loan of INR 5,000 and bought the sarees woven by other people and started trading those sarees. She says, “If this kind of clothes would not have

been there I would have died earlier.” The financial support from Chanura has given her a ray hope for a better lifestyle. Now she earns INR 15,000 p.m. She has bought Almirah out of her saved amount in which she keeps the stocks that are required for the business.

Chanura Microfin wanted to enhance the knowledge base of its women entrepreneur members so with the support of Friends of Women World Banking (FWWB), Ahmedabad, training on Financial and Business Management Skill was given to them in the year 2016. Bilashini Devi also attended the first phase of training. She says, “I liked the video shown during the training which depicts that loan should always be taken for the productive purpose. I learned that saving is very important and because of my saving habit I was able to buy almirah (cupboard) for keeping the stocks. Red, Yellow, Green exercise (Think before you spend exercise) was very beneficial for me. After attending the training I understood the importance of bookkeeping and now I record each & every transaction. I budget my monthly income and never mix my household saving with business savings.”

Now I am counted as one of the reputed and well-earned families of Wangkhei. If Chanura has acted as a lamp for my life then training of FWWB has acted as an oil for that lamp. Now my neighbourhood thinks that I am a Trader.” She replied with a sheer smile of satisfaction when she was asked about her neighbour’s thought regarding her business and herself as a person.





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