

7. Economic Empowerment of Rural Women

Women Self Help Group

Magan Sangrahalaya Samiti mobilized 12,000 rural women and formed 1005 Self Help Groups (SHGs) in 125 villages. These women Self Help Groups are saving their hard-earned money in 23 rural banks. The annual monetary transaction of these SHGs amounts to more than Rs.16 Crores. By forming Self Help Groups these 12,000 rural women are saved from the clutches of money lenders and the vicious cycle of indebtedness.



Skill Training of Rural Women Entrepreneurs

In the Vidarbha region, the high cost of farming, the failing market for farm produce, adverse weather conditions, lack of alternative sources of income, and increasing indebtedness led many farmers to commit suicide. In every village, the number of women-headed families increased.

Mechanization has thrown women labour out of farm work; the farmland that grew food for the families now grow only commercial crops and food is bought from the market; extensive use of chemicals and roundups destroyed the green leafy vegetables which were the major sources of nutrition for women; and the cattle that gave women subsidiary income was slaughtered on a massive scale. The working days of the women labour shrank and so did their earnings. These women's labour, having no other skills and experience, were slipping into abject poverty.

In the year 2005, Magan Sangrahalaya Samiti (MSS) took up the mission of empowering these underprivileged rural women with productive skills, entrepreneurial ability, and leadership spirit. After many meetings and orientation camps, MSS trained 1400 SHG members. These rural women underwent entrepreneurship training in 40 national technical Institutes located in 20 states of India. After receiving training, they were assisted in setting up rural enterprises. These enterprises produce and sell the product locally whereby the money is circulated within the village, strengthening the rural economy.



8. Livelihood through Rural Enterprises

The MSS established 35 rural enterprises in 22 villages that manufacture 200 products and provide livelihood to 1000 artisans, farmers, and rural women. All these micro enterprises are Self-Reliant. The profit of these enterprises is recycled back to setup more rural micro enterprises.

MSS Established 35 Women Enterprises In Rural Wardha :

Textile Based Enterprises

1. Organic Cotton Processing & Rowing
2. Khadi Yarn Spinning
3. Khadi Fabric Weaving
4. Natural Processing, Dyeing, and Printing
5. Tailoring of Khadi Garments and Products

Cow based Enterprises

6. Cow Urine Collection
7. Cow Dung Products- Incense stick, Dhoop batti, and Mosquito coil, etc.

Agro-based Enterprises

8. Organic Seed Bank
9. Organic Manure
10. Herbal Pesticide
11. Organic Vegetable
12. Organic Cereal, Pulses & Spices
13. Processing of Cereals and Pulses
14. Farm Tool Fabrication Workshop
15. Tool Rental Shop for Farmers

Food-Based Enterprises

16. Cold Oil Press – Flax Seed, Groundnut, Mustard & Coconut
17. Organic Gud
18. Organic Spices
19. Pickles and Jams
20. Traditional Indigenous Food Products
21. Solar Dried Fruit Bars
22. Rosella Products
23. Organic Food Restaurant
24. Bakery

Forest-based Enterprises

25. Collection of Forest Produce for preparation of Natural Dyes
26. Processing of Forest Produce (Ber, Amla, Jamun, Bel, Neem, etc.)
27. Lantana Camara and Wood Articles
28. Forest & Vegetable Nursery

Herbal Products

29. Herbal Medicines
30. Herbal Hair Products
31. Herbal Beauty Products

Utility Product Enterprises

32. Toilet Soap, Washing Liquid Soap, and Phenyl
33. Utility Products (Roti pad, natural scrubber, apron, file, School bags)
34. Paper Products (Carry bags, paper pen, file cover, boxes)
35. Fly Ash Bricks and Prefabricated Cement Building Elements

Rural Women Enterprises

Food Processing Enterprise

Organic Spices unit



The organic spices units in Seloo and Girad villages prepare 35 varieties of unadulterated organic spices. The raw spices are obtained from organic farmers of Seloo, Samudrapur, and Yavatmal blocks.

Rosella Product Unit

During MSS campaign against the multinational soft drinks, MSS started selling drinks made from locally available flowers and fruits like Ambadi pods, Palash flowers, Bel fruit, Lemon, Orange, Gooseberry, Mango, etc.



As the demand for the fresh drink made from Rosella increased, for the first time in the Wardha district Rosella Product unit was set up. The Rosella unit utilizes Rosella for making beverages, pickles, bar and jam on commercial scale. The Rosella products are rich in micronutrients, anti-oxidants, and have medicinal properties.

Pickle & Jam Unit

During peak season the perishable fruits and vegetables are sold by farmers at throwaway prices and due to a lack of appropriate storage facilities, a large amount gets wasted. These Pickle and Jam units help local farmers to get better prices for seasonal fruits and vegetables. These units process locally grown perishable fruits and vegetables like Mango, Guava, Banana, Papaya, Lemon, Tomato, Brinjal, Bitter gourd, Chilly, Suran, etc. and makes value-added products like pickles and jams.

Indigenous Food Products

Traditionally, during the summer months, rural women prepared many indigenous healthy preparations that lasted the whole year. As the process of making these preparations is tedious and time-consuming therefore gradually this practice started fading. MSS set up enterprises to revive the traditional preparations of healthy food products. Presently four indigenous food product units prepare indigenous varieties of papad, nuggets, chutney, noodles, dried vegetables, flours etc. The raw materials for these units are procured from 20 surrounding villages.

Solar Drier Food Products



A major intervention in the food-processing unit is the use of Solar Drier for the production of fruit bars.

The Solar Food Product unit specializes in making mango, tamarind, ber, and Rosella fruit bars. The unit sells solar dried spices like garlic, chilli, ginger, mango and vegetables like onion, bitter gourd, and tomato.

Rural Bakery



As the ready to make and ready to eat snacks of big companies entered the rural market there was a sudden shift in food habits and, in place of the age-old healthy nutritious homemade breakfast (made of local millets), rural households started buying low-cost bakery products, snacks, and noodles made by branded companies. To substitute these unhealthy snacks a rural Bakery unit was set up in Yelakeli Village. The bakery makes healthy bakery items from whole wheat and millets instead of refined flour and uses organic brown sugar in place of refined sugar.



Organic Gud Unit



To overcome iron deficiency, dehydration, weakness and dust-related problems MSS propagates the use of 'Gud' or (Jaggery). MSS also holds women's health camps to encourage rural households to include healthy Gud in their diet and substitute the harmful white sugar with healthy Gud.

The MSS Organic Gud unit in Yelakeli village uses organic Sugar Cane to produce good quality, low cost, iron-rich, nutritious Gud.



Edible Oil Unit

To meet the demand for edible oil, India imports 70% GM Soya, Palm, and GM Canola Oil and sells it at heavily subsidized rates to Indian consumers. To keep the local edible oil rates down the Indian Government permits the industrial oil units to mix up 30% (harmful) imported oils.

A decade back 80% of rural households of the Vidarbha region that consumed Flax Seed oil has shifted to soybean oil. To counter this, MSS is leading the 'Tel Swaraj' movement. The movement is to bring awareness in consumers regarding the hazardous of unhealthy imported oils and requesting them to revert back to healthy, fresh, locally made Flaxseed and Groundnut oils.

MSS is also organizing a signature campaign to protest against the Government's policy of closing down decentralized Gandhi's Ghani (Wooden oil expeller).

MSS has set up three cold press oil units in Kopra, Girad and Wardha villages (Maharashtra). Apart from fresh, healthy and nutritious Flax Seed, Groundnut, Sesame, Mustard, and Coconut oils, these units sell good quality oil cakes, containing 20 to 30 % oil as cattle feed to farmers. These oil units also serve as service centres where, at a very nominal rate, the farmers can process their oil seeds.



MSS is leading a campaign in Samudrapur block to revive the cultivation of Flaxseed. The campaign has led to an increase in the number of farmers growing Flaxseed from 5 to 100.

Cow Dung Based Enterprises

Manure Unit



Commercial crops like Sugarcane, Banana, Orange, Cotton, and Pulses dominate the local agrarian economy. With decreasing productivity of soil, the commercial farmers have started demanding cow dung based manure and organic compost. Units in Seloo and Samurapur block are producing manure on commercial scale.

Herbal Pesticide Unit



60% is used only for the cotton crop.

In this region, the dominant commercial crops are Cotton and Soya Bean. To protect these crops, farmers use high doses of costly chemical pesticides and weedicides. It is estimated that out of the total chemical pesticides used in farming,

In Samudrapur block, a commercial herbal pesticide unit is established that provides subsidiary income to 10 rural youth. The herbal pesticides are prepared from the locally available weeds, seeds, leaves, and spices. These herbal pesticides with the same efficacy as chemical pesticides cost four times less.



Chemical Free Incense Sticks



Two enterprises in Antergaon and Deulgaon villages of Selo Block are producing Cow-dung based chemical free Incense Sticks and other products like Dhoop Batti, tooth powder, and mosquito coil.

Cow Urine Collection Unit

Cow urine is the basic component in the preparation of herbal pesticides, manure, plant nutrients, and seed germination booster. To meet the demand of farmers, 12 Cow Urine collection centers were established in Arvi, Faridpur, Tawi, Shivanphal, Khursapar, Bhawanpur, Girad, and Pimpal Gaon villages of Samudrapur block.

Forest-Based Enterprises

Herbal Products

These enterprises are manufacturing 20 varieties of products from forest produce like Aloe Vera, Amla, Bel, Ber, Mango, Tamarind, Tulsi, and Neem. From plucking to processing of forest produce these enterprises are providing livelihoods to tribal households.



Herbal Medicines

The herbal product units are established in Jamni and Antargaon villages. The unit manufactures thirteen herbal products, including health products especially for lactating mothers, white discharge, general weakness, anaemia, cough, cold, diabetes, pain, sore feet, cuts, and burns. They also make therapeutic massage oils, hair conditioners, and skincare products.

Wild Palm Broom

Wild palm grows abundantly in some parts of this region. Because of the high cost of grass brooms, the villagers generally use locally made wild palm broom.



To improve the quality and life of palm broom, an electric shredder machine is introduced to the broom artisans. Keeping in view the market demand, MSS trained the broom artisans to make new varieties of brooms like Temple broom (for cleaning household temple), Laxmi



broom (for Laxmi Poojan), Truck broom (for cleaning the truck driver's cabin), Decorative Broom (with a decorative handle made from Palm leaf), and Colored Wooden Handle broom etc.

Wooden Toys from Waste Wood



The Doodh Koda (Tomentosa Dinctoria) is a softwood tree that grows wildly in the forest of the Vidarbha region. This wood is generally used as fuel but in Andhra Pradesh is used for making toys and utility items.



MSS invited Artisans from Andhra Pradesh and trained a team of women in the art of using Dudh Koda wood for manufacturing educational toys, buttons, key chains, incense stick stand, birds and ornaments. These products are coloured with natural Lacquer making them Eco -Friendly and harmless for small children and toddlers.

Lantana Furniture



Lantana Camara is a wild forest weed that hindered the growth of other forest plants. To control its spread, the forest department, at most places in the region, burn it. Instead of burning it, MSS Unit is utilizing Lantana for making furniture as it is durable, insect-free, and is a cheaper substitute for wood and bamboo furniture.



Wild Sponge Gourd Scrubber



The rural women and children collect wild sponge gourd from surrounding wasteland and forest and supply to the unit. The units make natural Loofa scrubber for bathing and scrubber for cleaning vessels.

Utility Product Enterprise

Soap Unit



The objective of this enterprise is to produce neutral toilet soap that does not harm the skin. The unit makes soaps using non-edible oils as a base. These soaps are a cheaper and safer substitute for costly chemical-based toilet soaps. Along with toilet soaps, the unit manufactures Liquid Soap, Dish Washing Powder, Liquid Blue, and Phenol. These units are providing employment to rural women of Hingni, Kopra, and Deulgaon villages.

Utility Products



The women trained in tailoring & craft run the utility product enterprise. The enterprise manufactures school bags, carry bags, money purses, Roti pads, file covers, etc.



Recycled Paper Products

The ban on plastic shopping bags helped the SHGs to setup a recycled paper product enterprise where they manufacture paper bags and paper pens using old newspapers. From good quality handmade paper, the enterprises manufacture file covers, boxes, carry bags etc. Five rural women work in this unit.



Fly Ash Bricks

To minimize the environmental degradation caused by using fertile soil and checking carbon emission in the atmosphere for manufacturing bricks, MSS took to using Fly Ash to manufacture bricks. (Fly ash is a very fine glassy powdery material, predominantly silica, generated by the combustion of fine ground coal in thermal power plants).

The Fly Ash brick is manufactured by mixing industrial wastes like Fly Ash, stone dust, Gypsum, and Lime sludge and making bricks by using a specially designed hydraulic press. The Fly Ash Brick enterprise is established in Antargaon village.



Prefabricated Building components



In rural areas there is a rising demand for prefabricated building components like fencing poles, doors, windows, ventilators, water tanks, etc. Ten rural women and youth are trained in the fabrication of building components. Presently, Prefabricated Building components unit is fabricating cement rings to make water tanks, septic tanks, and cement covers for drains.



In rural areas, the drinking water is supplied only on two days per week that too only for half an hour. Due to lack of storage facilities the rural households are unable to store water in sufficient quantity. To meet this demand the unit fabricates 1000

lit. capacity water storage tanks, each tank costs Rs.12,000. Compared to the plastic tank the cement tank is more durable and keeps the water cool.

