

CASE STUDY 1: SAVITA KEMSE
PROJECT: RURAL DEVELOPMENT FOR POVERTY REDUCTION
PERIOD: 2008-2011

Purpose to Prosperity

By Poorva Sagar, OneWorld South Asia

It is a busy morning at Savita Kemse's house. She hurriedly cooks lunch for her daughter and son and then sweeps the house clean. In another half hour, Savita will leave for her farm to pluck fresh vegetables for sale in nearby Pirangut town.

"I sell around 30 kg of brinjals, lady fingers, tomatoes and chillies every alternate day," she says, after a quick mental calculation.

Savita, 35, resides in Kemsebadi village in Mulshi taluka near Pune city in Indian state Maharashtra. Benefiting from the Pune based Institute of Cultural Affairs' (ICA) initiative 'Rural Development for Poverty Reduction,' supported by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), her family has prospered quickly in the past three years.



Savita (left) and her sister-in-law with their children at home/ Photo credit: Satish Nagaraji/ OneWorld

Savita's family comprises her husband and two children, her in-laws, and her brother-in-law and his wife and two children.

The family owns three acres of land which is cultivated all through the year with diversified crops, thanks to the lift-irrigation system and four-step farming training gained from ICA field officers. "The technique has produced 30% more rice than the previous year," Savita says happily.

The project was initiated in 2008 in four villages of the Mulshi taluka in Pune district – Khamboli, Katarkhadak, Andhale and Jawal.

The project aims to improve the productivity of cultivable land through irrigation and agro-forestry, thereby making agriculture profitable. Alongside, it provides training in dairy management as a lucrative business avenue. These local livelihood opportunities have reassured many residents, previously migrating to Pune for work, to stay back in their village homes.

The JICA project also promotes biogas as an alternative source of fuel among farmer households – thus integrating dairy development with clean energy production.

Entrepreneurship

Savita calls out to her children for breakfast as she brings in fodder for her dairy animals. Her family owns 28 animals including three cows, 14 big buffaloes and other small animals. Together they produce 60 litres of milk per day – of which 27 litres go to the milk collection centre run by ICA at their village.

She is happy with the price offered by them – an added incentive to sell the milk at the centre. “We don’t force them to sell the milk at our collection centre, we simply give them options and networking,” says Shankar Jadhav, Executive Director, ICA.

Traditionally, dairy is the domain of men in the family. But Savita plays an extensive role – from cleaning the animals to feeding and milking them. She is a strong exception to the norm and is breaking stereotypes and inspiring other village women to action.



Her trainings in dairy management and business have evolved Savita into an entrepreneur. She is now well aware of the principles of money circulation within the local economy.

The biogas plant set up by ICA has replaced her smoky and cumbersome firewood stove with clean and hassle free cooking on biogas. The dung from her animals is used to feed the plant. Once the biogas is piped for cooking, the slurry is used as rich organic fertiliser. The result – tastier and organic fresh vegetables with a high demand!

Besides, the indigenous food and milk produce provide Savita and her family the right nutrition in times of rising food costs.

Savita carries the dung for the biogas plant/ Photo credit: Sataish Nagaraji/ OneWorld

The yield has now increased and so have Savita's income and aspirations. Her husband and others are proud of her entrepreneurial skills that have brought in better incomes for the whole family. She has now bought land worth eight lakh rupees in Pirangut where she intends to set up a vegetable shop and educate her children in a good school.

Having done her morning tasks, she is now ready to leave her home for a day's work at her farm. Yes, there is no looking back for Savita.

(Additional reporting by Satish Nagaraji)

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