

**CASE STUDY 2: RAHUL MARUTI MALPOTE**  
**PROJECT: RURAL DEVELOPMENT FOR POVERTY REDUCTION**  
**PERIOD: 2008-2011**

**Return of the migrant**

*By Poorva Sagar, OneWorld South Asia*

In the quiet retreat of the sprawling Sahyadri mountain range in India's western state of Maharashtra, is Katarkhadak village. The road outside the small village temple is abuzz with activity in the wee hours of morning as villagers gather patiently with cans of milk.



Young Rahul Maruti Malpote, 23, who has started a dairy business recently, soon arrives on his motorbike to collect the milk. After the preliminary greetings, they get down to business.

The villagers gaze intently at the lactometer which he dips into their samples to detect its richness and purity.

*Locals wait to sell milk at Katarkhadak / Photo credit: Satish Nagaraji/ OneWorld*

“The milk is of good quality,” says Rahul, satisfied with the lactometer floating on the milk. After a collection of about 25 litres from the locals and another 30 litres from his own dairy animals, he rides off to the neighbouring city of Pune for a profitable sale at a bigger dairy.

Rahul started his business after being introduced to dairy management by Pune based non-profit Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) India, as part of its ‘Rural Development for Poverty Reduction’ project. Launched in 2008 in four villages of Mulshi taluka including Katarkhadak, the project is supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

The project focuses on boosting productivity of land through simple techniques in irrigation and agro-forestry and dairy development. Building leadership capabilities of villagers such as Rahul is central to its objective to lifting people out of poverty in the region.

## **Leading by example**

A big shed adjoining the modest and rustic house of Rahul is home to two buffaloes, three cows, ten chickens and three goats. The backyard is lush with trees and plants that he lovingly nurtures. Rahul is now both enthused and satisfied with his business.

Three years back Rahul worked as an electrician in a college outside his village. Staying away from his home, he was not happy. Also his meagre income was not enough to make ends meet.

At that very time, Tanaji Narayan Malpote, the field officer with ICA India, did his round of Rahul's village to introduce locals to sustainable agriculture and agro-forestry and dairy development.

Rahul was eager to learn. By the end of the trainings, he knew how to use the four-step rice cultivation technique, practice organic agriculture, measure fat in milk with a lactometer, and secure the best fodder for his animals.

He began assisting ICA with its dairy activities at neighbouring village Khamboli. He was particularly inspired by local resident Sandeep Khanekar, who runs a successful dairy business in partnership with ICA.

In 2010 Rahul began helping Sandeep to collect and market the milk. In due course, he saved enough to start his own dairy business. Albeit small in its scale of operation, he is now successfully delivering 55 litres of milk to his customers daily.

## **Green yield**

ICA India's main approach was to integrate farming, agro-forestry, dairy and biogas in a manner in which they support each other. "We do not impose our ideas on villagers. We train them and then they are free to pursue any activity they want. We are mere facilitators," said a modest Shankar Jadhav, Executive Director, ICA India.



*Rahul now wants to increase his animal farm/ Photo credit: Satish Nagaraji/ OneWorld*

Rahul's two acre farm land had a bumper yield of 800 kg of rice last year, thanks to the four-step cultivation technique and lift irrigation system introduced by ICA. "This year we expect a 30% increase," says Rahul, beaming.

In his second crop cycle, he sows fodder for his livestock that he now plans to increase – five more buffaloes, five more cows and ten goats will add to his herd. He also plans to buy a hundred chickens – making him the first in his village to start a poultry business!

Rahul, the once reluctant migrant, is now a promising entrepreneur. "I will not work for any company now. I am more than content with my own business at home," he says self-assuredly. It has indeed been a grand homecoming to satisfaction and success.

END

*(Additional reporting by Satish Nagaraji; editing by Swati Sahi)*