

Sabai Craft Business: Making Rural Women Shined in Lockdown



Anjali Mallik is the President of Maa Laxmi SHG, Lodha Colony of Gangasole Village of Baghada GP, Suliapada Block, Mayurbhanja, Odisha. At the age of 13 she got married in her own village. But her husband was absconded since last ten years. Anjali is illiterate and her socio-economic condition was miserable. She was vulnerable to food insecurity with ill health. She lives with her age old widow mother who is unable to earn.

Village Gangasole and its adjacent areas are rich with Sabai grass production. Sabai grass is a natural growing grass. In this area, bi-product of sabai grass is the major source of livelihood among PVTGs. Most of the PVTG women are always busy in this painstaking job of sabai rope making as major source of income earning. Earlier, this grass was traditionally used just for making of ropes which was labour intensive. Traditionally, the grass is collected and dried to make ropes by manually operated machine.

OPELIP always focused for improving the economic condition of PVTG families' especially destitute and vulnerable category. Considering the gravity of the situation, the Lodha Development Agency (LDA) Morada extended support to the Lodha PVTGs in this area. OPELIP provided skill development training to the PVTGs on Sabai Craft under CCD scheme. The skill has been helping for fulfillment of their aspiration. The special effort has been taken to provide IGA support to fifteen numbers of PVTG women. Rs.15,000/- has been provided to each PVTG beneficiary of the Gangasole VDC for Sabai product business. Anjali is one among them.

Anjali take leadership to arrange training on Sabai Craft. She has formed Shiva Shakti Producer group on Sabai Craft consisting 25 PVTG women. It is found that PVTG women artistic hands have given a new dimension to Sabai grass by making beautiful handicraft products. Through design intervention, the grass has become a boon and has transformed many such Anjali's lives. All the IGA beneficiaries in lockdown situation remaining their home doing Sabai craft work with maintaining COVID protocols. They have gained knowledge to directly sell their products and deal with customers. At present, they are selling their own Sabai products directly through OPELIP/ Mayurshilpa.

Recently they have been experienced two big challenges. One is the 2nd wave of COVID pandemic and the second one is the cyclonic storm Yaas from dated 25th to 27th May 2021. During the lockdown period, they have used their skill of crafts making which they have acquired during sabai craft training. Livelihood is not stopped of PVTG women even after the cyclonic storm, Yaas and COVID-19 pandemic.