CHANGEMAKERS
LIVELIHOODS

An entrepreneur who invested in workers, an innovator who touched lives, and ideas that empowered hundreds: Social Impact awardees who've made a lasting difference.

Training that works: Self-help is best help



MOUSE POWER HOLDS THE KEY

Their DIY lesson: Skill schools & dairy units

Ahmedabad: If you wish to see a social impact initiative magnifying the power and reach of ordinary people, see it here at the Self-Employed Women's Association (Sewa), an organization of poor women workers.

2012
SEWA Self-Employed Women's Association

In 2012, Sewa won the TOI Social Impact Awards in the NGO segment. The award brought to public attention a cooperative for waste-picker women and marginal farm labourers whom Sewa helped become self-reliant through skill building, access to credit and social security.

"TOI's award recognized the contribution of poor women working in the informal sector. It ratified the work of millions of marginal sector women in managing new enterprises," says Reema Nanavaty, director of rural and economic development, Sewa.

Sewa grew out of Ahmedabad's Textile Labour Association. Founded in 1972 by Ela Bhatt, a lawyer by training, it's a trade union of poor, unorganized self-employed women who work as vendors, hawkers, head-loaders and labourers.

Sewa has come a long way since the awards. The waste collectors' co-operative, with help from consulting major Accenture, streamlined its business model. This effort bore fruit and the co-operative inked a deal with a large online office stationery chain, supplying recycled notebooks, writing pads, files and other products.

Another Sewa venture was the 150 skill schools to train young, self-employed women in 108 sectors over the last two years. The number of trainees at these schools has swelled to 25,000. Students are taught information communication and technology (ICT), their skills upgraded and diversified.

Sewa has gone a step further in the dairy sector with the Pico project. Here, the organization's para-vets are given tablets with an embedded mini projector. They train women in bovine care and introduce them to technology. For the Pico project, Sewa recently partnered with TCS.

Sewa has 50 special Gyan Vigyan resource centers for community learning and business. These have facilities like telemedicine and tele-agriculture and help women seek answers to queries from experts. TNN

THE TIMES OF INDIA
Social Impact Awards
in partnership with
ADITYA BIRLA GROUP
www.timessocialawards.com
For queries, email
socialimpactawardstoi@gmail.com

A new way of life for 4,800 tribal families in Maoist-dominated areas

The Central Silk Board (CSB) has expanded the scope of generating livelihood through *tasar* sericulture impacting 36,000 tribal families across 23 districts of 8 states.

2012
Central Silk Board

The CSB has done pioneering work in the Maoist-dominated districts. Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), part of the National Livelihood Rural Mission (NRLM), has collaborated with CSB to create opportunities for marginalized women. "We replicated the Bihar and Jharkhand model in other states. We received Rs 71.5 crore from MKSP to support sericulturists and their efforts. "Nurseries are being set up to raise tasar host plants," said Ishita Roy, IAS, member secretary, CSB. Roy said the project now covers Maharasthra, Odisha, AP, Telangana, Chhattisgarh and Bengal. The aim: To attract tribal youth and women into silk production. In Bihar and Jharkhand, the Silk Board's expanded its footprint covering 4,800 tribal families.



SILK ROUTE

Roy believes the 2012 TOI Social Impact Award helped significantly increase levels of skills and performance by women in agriculture. "Last year, Rs 56 crore was allocated from the MKSP fund. Rearer groups set up Tasar Vikas Samitis (TVS) aggregating themselves into co-operative societies in districts," she said.

Lack of food security threatened livelihoods of tribal families triggering seasonal migration. With tasar sericulture gaining ground in these states, it has attracted tribal youth into silk production, weaning them away from disruptive activities like Maoism in Bihar and parts of Jharkhand. PRADHAN (Professional Assistance For Development Action), an NGO, was the implementing agency for the programme. "To improve participation, motor-cum-pedal operated reeling-cum-twisting and spinning machines will be distributed to tribal women," Roy added. TNN

Living out a dream: Contented weaver, customer key to success

Jaipur: Archna Devi's labour of love, carpets she wove, found homes across the world. She settled down at her quaint Mahasingh Ka Baas village in Alwar. A monthly income from carpet weaving helped her fulfil her needs.

2012
Jaipur Rugs

That was yesterday. Now, this weaver with the Jaipur Rugs Company has a new dream. "I worked like a labourer. Now, I understand the importance of sticking to deadlines and ensuring quality. Someday, even I can become an entrepreneur," she says.

Giving flight to her dreams is the Jaipur Rugs Company's new bottom-up approach, an innovation launched after it was chosen for the 2012 TOI Social Impact award. "On our way to Delhi to accept the award we were pondering on the concept of calling the weavers to first take the award from the President. We realised it is people at the bottom of the pyramid who mean the most," says company founder Nand Kishore Chaudhary or Bhaisaab, who formed the company in 1978. Realization soon flowed into action. The first batch of 500 weavers from Thanagazi, Shahpura and Dhanota branches of Jaipur Rugs stepped into the head-office to see the finishing processes that carpets and rugs they weave go through before finding a place in living rooms in the US or Europe. The visit left most of them in awe.



MAGIC CARPET

Jaipur Rugs hires about 40,000 weavers on 7,000 looms in 3,150 villages in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Bihar, UP and Jharkhand offering them the option of making carpets as an attractive means of livelihood. It identifies BPL communities and aims to employ unskilled, unemployed, uneducated rural women, training them, giving them raw materials and orders. "We've, since the award, introduced the concept of the Founders Mentality where contentment of weavers and customers are key," says CEO Sameer Chaturvedi. Another step was an educational vocational programme for villagers. TNN

To apply/ nominate an organization, please log onto www.timessocialawards.com
Connect with us on Facebook : www.facebook.com/TOIMYTIMES; twitter : @TOI_MyTimes (tweet with #socialimpactawards)
For any queries, please write to us at socialimpactawardstoi@gmail.com