

News / Education Today / News / Tribal housewife uses skill training to turn herself into bamboo entrepreneur

Tribal housewife uses skill training to turn herself into bamboo entrepreneur

Mira Devi is a determined woman with a strong desire to learn some technical skills in order to support the family's financial condition.



India Today Web Desk

New Delhi

March 8, 2021 UPDATED: March 8, 2021 16:07 IST



33-year-old Santhali tribal woman showing the decorated bamboo handicrafts design.

3 3-year-old Santhali tribal woman Mira Devi lives in a remote tribal village Kelo of Rania block of Khunti district Jharkhand, situated 38 km from the district headquarter and 71 km from the state capital Ranchi. This village is on the border of Khunti district headquarter and West Singhbhum district. The dominant community of the village is scheduled tribe and their local dialect of the language is Santhali and Hindi.

The village is also surrounded by forest areas where tribal communities access the Non-timber forest produce collections from the forest like Lac, Chironji, Mahua, bamboo, etc. for their income generation.

Family background:

Mira Devi has 2 children - the elder one is 11 years old and the younger one is 6 years old. Her husband's name is Birsa Manji. Like other women, she has the responsibility of domestic household chores and rearing children as a housewife. Her family is dependent on her husband's income. He is engaged in masonry work. He earns around Rs 7,000-8,000 per month.

Mira Devi faced difficulties as her husband's income was insufficient for the household to meet their requirements due to the irregularity of masonry work in the locality. Mira Devi is a determined woman with a strong desire to learn some technical skills in order to support the family's financial condition.



Mira Devi employed tribal women at Kelo village, Rania Block, Khunti



Live demonstration of bamboo handicrafts by Mira Devi at Womens Day celebration TRDSW Torpa 2019

Here's how she became the bamboo handicrafts entrepreneur

So the change happened in February 2018, when Mira Devi participated in the one-month bamboo handicraft training at Kelo, Rania block, Khunti district, with the intervention of Torpa Rural Development Society for Women (TRDSW), supported by EdelGive Foundation, where more than 18 women participated and she learned the skill of bamboo handicraft art.

TRDSW aims to help increase the annual income, especially of local tribal women through engagement in various livelihood activities.

For many women like Mira Devi, who have never got a chance to develop such skill training programme, this has meant training in bamboo handicrafts to enhance the financial condition of many tribal women through an increase of product value.

Mira Devi realised that one-month training organised by TRDSW was not enough. So, she took the initiative, she continuously participated in follow-up training programmes in Ranchi to hone her skill on bamboo handicraft art at her own expense where she learned some decorative and creative antique design-making with bamboo.

As a result, her hard work and dedication paid back and today she has become a master trainer in bamboo handicraft art. Her confidence in herself and her bamboo art increased and using local bamboo she prepared antique bamboo handicraft designs such as an assortment of globes, pen stands, boxes, lanterns, etc. in order to compete with market products.

Different platforms where Mira Devi showcased her skillful talent:

Seeing her confidence, commitment, and dedication to create such decorative designs in bamboo, she was given the opportunity to participate in SARAS MELA 2018 in Ranchi by TRDSW to showcase her skillful talent. In 2019, she went to Dumka district to display her bamboo handicrafts for sale. She participated in the Entrepreneurial Fair organised by Udhoyg Vibhag where all her products sold out in a trade fair.

This boosted her confidence, even more, to do something bigger and promote the sale of bamboo handicrafts. She also participated in the district-level trade fair in Udhoyg Mela, 2020 at Khunti and Jharkhand state-level trade fair, Kisan Mela 2021, organised by IINRG (Indian Institute of Natural Resins and Gums) in Ranchi.

"Earlier I was living within my own constraints in the community, but Mahila Vikas Kendra (Torpa Rural Development Society for Women) opened the space of opportunity to explore my desire," said Mira Devi.

Three years on, Mira Devi's life has changed completely from a common housewife and daily drudgery to a 'master trainer of bamboo handicrafts. Her bamboo art now fetches a good amount of returns after she mastered the skill of bamboo handicrafts.

Now, she has turned into a master trainer of bamboo handicraft art and gives gainful employment opportunities to other women whose financial condition is not good and who struggle to meet their household requirements. As a master trainer, she conducted bamboo handicraft training for tribal women in other districts of Jharkhand such as Bokaro, Ranchi, and Dumka.

As a result, currently, 8 tribal women of Kelo village work together with her. Also, she sold many products of bamboo handicraft designs where she earns a good amount around Rs 70,000 to 80,000 to the present day. In the three years span, Mira Devi's income is now more than trifold.

Further, Mira Devi said, "Earlier, my husband's income was barely enough to meet the household requirements."

"Now I earn more than what my husband earned earlier. I can now meet all the requirements of the household and I am thinking of an expansion of Bamboo Handicraft art as well as I intend to establish my own shop. "

"In this challenging pandemic time where there is no (Saras Mela) trade fair organised in the districts of Jharkhand, I dream of having my own bamboo handicraft shop," she added.