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## SUCCESS STORY

# Empowering the Rural Women of Hilly Areas through **PARSHAD MAKING**



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## INTRODUCTION

Self Help Groups (SHGs) have been instrumental in women empowerment by enabling them to work together. It is a process which ultimately leads to self fulfilment of each member of group. Poverty continues to be a serious problem in hilly district Reasi of Jammu and Kashmir where about 37.93% of people are below poverty line. Gender mainstreaming strategy aims at provision of benefits of growth process to women by socio-economic background in terms of income, labour, credit, investment etc. Self Help Groups strategy also adopts the same philosophy and aims at bringing the neglected woman into main stream of economic development through saving and income generation strategy.

SHG is an informal association of 10-15 women who voluntarily come together for saving of credit and enhances the members' financial security as primary focus. The primary purpose of SHG is to improve the socio-economic status of poor rural women, especially to increase their income. SHG provide monetary and moral support to individual members. Women's SHGs are transforming the face of the Indian villages. Trainings and economic independence have empowered the women. With SHGs the lives of women from underprivileged

groups have undergone a sea change. SHGs are considered as self-driven movements impacting specially the rural poor people. SHGs formation provide an opportunity to women to interact with each other, understand their common problems, channel their savings and encourage for development. SHGs provide the benefits of economics in certain areas by undertaking common action programmes like cost effective credit delivery system, generating a forum for collective learning with rural people, creating democratic culture, developing entrepreneurial culture, providing a base for dialogue and cooperation, developing credibility and power to assure participation. Self Help Groups have been recognised in all over India as one of the most suitable tools for delivering micro-finance to the poor people. The SHGs are like precious diamond whose quality depends on the way they are shaped.

### Methodology applied :

KVK, Reasi has made strenuous efforts in gender streamlining. It has endeavoured to aware, train and motivate the women farmers in the hilly districts of Reasi and Udhampur. The extension literature and information through TV/Radio played a catalytic role for the SHG. Keeping the scope of SHGs in Reasi district, KVK, Reasi has made rigorous efforts to form, manage and



strengthen the SHGs. Serwad village is around 4 km away from holy town Katra. A baseline survey of the village was done by the KVK team. Holy town Katra has immense scope of Prashad making/food processing for Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine. Women farmers of this village were encouraged and technically supported by KVK, Reasi the SHG for Prashad making. They were guided to have fortnight meetings to develop a healthy rapport among themselves. The name of the group was decided by the group members as "Vaishno Devi Mahila Group" by its 10 members. Apart from training programme, KVK conducted farmers-scientists interaction, employed print media coverage radio talk, TV talks, film shows, special group meeting etc. for the SHGs. The advantages of groups were elaborated to SHG members. The group president, secretary, treasurer were selected and group members were advised for saving the money. The homogeneity of groups in terms of their socio-economic status was also taken into consideration. They were guided for the proper book keeping. Training programme conducted by KVK for SHG proved a convincing tool and played a significant role in creating interest and capacity building among the group members. "Vaishno Devi Mahila Group" has proved that how women can organise together to beat the poverty and despair. This group is progressing day-by-day.

### Impact of KVK

KVK, Reasi regularly impart trainings on SHGs especially for the women farmers. KVK, Reasi also provided extension literature and organized farmers-scientists interaction for the SHG. Around Rs 80/kg are consumed in preparing Parshad and it is sold @ Rs.120/kg. Presently the annual income of group is Rs.2, 62,000/-. SHG helped to brought the economic upliftment, developed leadership qualities and inculcated great confidence among the group members. With increase in the income of group, the women members get respect from their families and were recognised by other members of community. By observing the successful result of "Vaishno Devi Mahila Group" in Serwad, the other women of the area are showing keen interest in SHG formation. With the formation of SHG women developed confidence to mitigate their basic needs. A self-reliance and entrepreneurial spirit has been developed among the group members. The members of this SHG has become pillars for growth and sustainability of their families. They have become torchbearers for the other women of the area and now they are advising the other women to form SHGs to come out from the poverty. KVK, Reasi is striving hard for women empowerment through SHGs in Reasi district. The group was awarded by the Union Minister, Dr. Jitendra Singh during his visit at KVK, Reasi in 2016.