Lockdown Motivation: Couple digs a pond for drip irrigation

An enterprising couple uses the lockdown productively and digs a pond to solve the water shortage on their farm. The pond filled with pre-monsoon rain water is now feeding their micro drip irrigation installation.

The Covid-19 lockdown was utilised by an enterprising couple in rural Jharkhand in the most positive way. Sankari Kuntiya and her husband Krishna Kuntiya dug up their personal pond in order to ensure perennial water source for Micro Drip Irrigation (MDI) that was installed on their land under Jharkhand Horticulture Intensification for Micro Drip Irrigation (JHIMDI) project.

Enterprising couple

Sankari, a resident of Chirchi Village, Koklo Panchayat, Tantnagar Block of West Singhbhum became associated with Chameli Aajeevika Self Help Group back in 2017. She was a homemaker while her husband Krishna used to work as a mechanic in a local shop. Post SHG formation, Krishna got an opportunity to serve as the Bookkeeper in Chameli SHG along with a few other SHGs as majority of the population in Chirchi village is illiterate. Krishna, who had completed Standard 9 was comparatively more educated. He began maintaining 7 books of record for various SHGs. Thus began Krishna’s association with...
J-SRLM. Krishna is also serving as the Aajeekai Krishak Mitra (AKM) for his village since 2018. Sankari meanwhile became president of her SHG as well as VO.

Idea for perennial water body
During the lockdown period, while the couple was staying at home, they struck upon the idea of digging up their own pond to mitigate the irrigation water crisis that they were facing. Sankari is a beneficiary of Micro Drip Irrigation (MDI) installed under Jharkhand Horticulture Intensification for Micro Drip Irrigation (JHIMDI) project of JSLPS. However, despite getting advanced and technologically updated system, she was unable to cultivate crops in three seasons due to shortage of water in their personal well during Zaid season.

Despite the fact that their land is on a rocky terrain, the couple decided to dig their pond. The digging of a pond is not an easy task. For the couple it was tougher as they were digging their pond with whatever tools were available with them. The hard backbreaking work saw them digging up stones ranging up to 1.5 ton in weight. Both of them even got injured multiple times while breaking the tough rocks. Yet they persisted undeterred by their injuries and determined to achieve their lockdown aim.

To break down the rocks the duo employed a unique method they had learnt about and which is used in the area. Krishna and Sankari heated the huge rocks at a point so that the heat penetrated deep inside the boulders and loosened the bond of rock particles. Once the rocks were heated to a certain temperature, it took just a few hammers (external force) to shatter them into pieces.

It took the couple non-stop work of 45 days to finally shape the tough land into a Dobha 30feetx30 feetx13 feet in size.

The pond was ready in time to collect the pre-monsoon rain showers. Krishna then transferred the MDI system in the newly constructed Dobha.

Now the couple have planted a few seasonal vegetables in the plot and are watering it using the water accumulated in the pond.

Transformed lives
Krishna who worked as AKM got promoted to Senior AKM after a few exposures and trainings. He also got opportunities to visit Madhya Pradesh and Ranchi. These training and exposure visits helped him transform his skills and gain deeper knowledge into the drip system. Krishna then became associated with one of the vendors and began working on installation of the MDI system. He receives Rs 300 per installation.

Talking about the benefits of MDI, Sankari says, “If we grow three crops, one in each season with MDI intervention and follow all the SoPs then we can easily earn a profit of Rs 40,000–50,000 per year.”

The couple are now planning to plant tomato, chilli, brinjal and cauliflower in the off seasons to get a good price in the market.
On a self-sufficiency Mission

*From cultivation of pigeon pea to the production of pulses, Sakhi Mandal members in Pakur district are on the way to becoming a brand.*

Members of Sakhi Mandal in Pakur district of Jharkhand have started pigeon pea production under the MKSP project of JSLPS, RDD, GoJ. In Devinagar panchayat of Maheshpur block, 1000 women were provided with improved variety of 250g of pigeon pea by JSLPS, to be cultivated in 20 decimal land of each SHG member.

The SHG members cultivated pigeon pea adopting the SCI method using organic manure. Their untiring efforts led to a good harvest. In view of the good production, a mini pulses machine costing about Rs 2.28 lakh was provided by JSLPS to the Khirudih Producer Group of Chirudih village in the same block. In just three days, the SHG members produced more than 2 quintals of pulses. Till the time of reporting, the members had produced 22 quintals of pigeon pea against the target of 150 quintals of pigeon pea.

The vision is to connect the SHG women to agriculture-based self-employment in the village itself and at the same time enable them to supply pigeon pea in THR.

Pakur district, where earlier a large quantity of pigeon pea was imported, with the efforts of the Sakhi Mandal, is now no longer importing pigeon pea from outside the district.

Two more mini pulses machine are in the pipeline aimed at developing a pigeon pea brand around the efforts of these rural women and to add them to value chain. The efforts of the SHGs are inspired by vision of self-sufficient India and the district administration’s emphasis on going local.
A journey of self-emancipation

The story of Asha Kachhap inspires one and strengthens the belief that nothing is impossible as long one is led by human endeavor.

Journey of Asha Kachhap from a daily wage laborer to a salaried person is exemplary. It truly depicts the objective of Deen Dayal Antyodaya National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY NRLM) of empowering women and bringing people out of poverty.

Born in a poor family, Asha is the only child of her parents. Her parents were always subjected to comments that they don’t have a son and that their daughter Asha is a burden on them till Asha proved it otherwise. Social pressure compelled Asha’s parents to marry her at a young age. Asha was a minor and was studying in Std VIII when she got married to Vinod Kachhap of Sithiyo Nawatoli village in Namkum block of Ranchi district, Jharkhand. Following her marriage, Asha left her parents home, but poverty followed her to her husband’s home. Her husband was an alcoholic and was jobless. With the passage of time, Asha became mother to three children (two daughters and a son). She began working as a daily wage laborer to meet her family’s needs. Her income was fitful – sometimes she would earn a little but at other times she returned home empty handed. Life was miserable. But Asha had not lost hope and dreamt of becoming self-sufficient one day.

The year 2013 came as a ray of hope for Asha when she joined Jyoti Aajeevika SHG of DAY NRLM project running under the fold of Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS). From the SHG, Asha received financial support. She soon took a loan for household expenditure and for the education of her children.

Soon after Asha was selected as an Active Woman (AW) and started motivating other women in the village to join SHGs. Asha was later selected to become the Internal Community Resource Person (iCRP). She began travelling to other villages/blocks and districts for SHG formation.

Now she had a fixed regular income every month. She took another loan from her SHG to buy a scooty to make her work easier. She has taken Rs.50,000 in loans and has also returned it back with interest.

Asha’s climb up the ladder continued and she was selected to become the Resource Bookkeeper (RBK). To take up this role, she was sent to Andhra Pradesh on an exposure visit by JSLPS. This was the first time she had stepped out of her home state. To take up the role of RBK, Asha was giving training in bookkeeping and auditing. Later on, Asha after clearing the written exam and interview, became Internal Professional Resource Person (iPRP). In her role, as an iPRP, Asha had to look after SHG formation, SHG training and its budget and SHG account opening in panchayats.

Her work challenge began with this as she got posted in Mandar block of Ranchi, a Naxalite area and also far from her village. Everybody told Asha it would be difficult for her to work in Mandar. However, Asha, took up the challenge positively.
Living alone in Mandar was not easy but Asha performed exceptionally well and was chosen for a bigger responsibility.

After clearing the exam and interview conducted by JSLPS, Asha was selected as the Block Anchor Person (BAP). Initially, Asha was posted in Kundhit block of Jamtara district. As the responsibility was big, the challenge was even bigger. Jamtara is far from Ranchi. Leaving her children at her parents’ home, Asha moved to Jamtara in the year 2017. Asha worked really hard in her new role and did a great job too. Presently, Asha is working in Ichak block of Hajaribagh district and is getting a salary of about Rs 20,000–25,000 per month.

Sadly, Asha’s husband continues to be an alcoholic. Asha is looking after her three children, her parents, three children of her brother-in-law who is not alive and also his handicap father-in-law. Living away from the family is not easy, but according to Asha, “We have to make a choice for better living and have to sacrifice for a good future just like our armed forces do for our country. Now, everyone in my parents’ home is proud of me. My male cousins are doing nothing and I on my own have carved my identity – an identity from a daily wage earner to a salaried person.”

The credit for this transformation of Asha goes to her SHG. “I am financially independent and also completed my education till graduation. Now, I plan to pursue a course in rural development and also build my house. For constructing my house, I have applied to the Sittiyo Village Organization for a loan of Rs two lakh.”

Asha has proved that there is nothing that is impossible. The only thing which is needed for changing your circumstances is hard work and a strong will power. Journey of Asha Kachhap proves that poverty can be eliminated with proper planning, strong schemes and transparency in project implementation.
Village Youths trained under DDU-GKY work in essential services

The youth rise to the occasion and serve the nation in these tough pandemic times.

DDU-GKY facilitates the rural youths of remote locations to learn and enhance their skills for better earning. Youths ranging between 18-35 years are provided full-time residential training in various domains according to their educational qualification, interest and potential. One of the domains is General Duty Assistant for which the minimum qualification required is class 12.

In Khunti district, total 7 batches of phlebotomy technician have already graduated from DDU-GKY’s Cradle Life Science Pvt Ltd (the Program Implementing Agency). The training for phlebotomy technicians is of six months duration. Post the training, the youths are placed in various hospitals.

All the candidates are serving in multi-speciality hospitals like Ford, Janodaya, Ramaiah, Orchid, Health Heal and Pulse. Majority of the candidates are working in Bangalore, followed by Ranchi and Patna. The average income of the candidates is Rs 9,881 ranging from Rs 7,500 to Rs 16,000. Many have been provided free accommodation and hostel facilities for residing in big cities which reduces their overall expense.

Tusu Kumari, a Covid warrior and resident of Landup village of Sadar block of Khunti district, says, “DDU-GKY provided me a platform for training and helped me get a placement which made me self-reliant. Moreover, working for the needy people and serving them as a part of the essential services team motivates me. I feel it is a privilege to serve people during the pandemic. This Job also provides me and my family with financial stability.

During the Covid pandemic, 39 participants from 7 different batches from Khunti are extending essential services to various hospitals across the country.

The youth belong to economically weaker sections and are given free of cost full time residential training which lasts six months. They are also provided stipends after joining hospitals. The details of the people working during the pandemic is mentioned in the table.
Van Dhan Vikas Kendra: Bringing prosperity to the forest tribals

An initiative that envisions bringing livelihood to the forest-based tribes in their homes, it is demonstrating that the indigenous wealth and native wisdom of the forest tribes can be combined to make them self-sufficient and put them firmly on the path of progress.

Prime Minister Vikas Kendra Yojana (PVDVK) is a composite program, meant for forest-based tribes. The idea is to optimize tribal income locally using non-timber forest produces. This will be done through establishment of common use facilities for value addition, to be called Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs). Inclusive development, women’s empowerment, tribal aspirations, tribes’ development, forest conservation, livelihood promotion, promotion of tribal culture and ease of living for forest-tribes are the key elements behind the promotion of Van Dhan Vikas Kendras. The premise is that if Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) activities strengthens then the tribal people can become prosperous in their own habitat, in the shortest time span.

Van Dhan Vikas Kendra is primarily a component under the mechanism for marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) & Development of Value Chain of Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA). Van Dhan Vikas Kendra scheme is an initiative targeting livelihood generation for tribals by harnessing the wealth of the forest. The programme aims to tap into traditional knowledge and skill sets of tribals by adding technology and IT to upgrade it at each stage and to convert the tribal wisdom into a viable economic activity. A typical Van Dhan Vikas Kendra constitutes 10 tribal Van Dhan Vikas Self Help Groups (SHGs), each comprising upto 30 MFP gatherers or tribal handicraft artisans, i.e., about 300 beneficiaries per Kendra (subject to variability as per local conditions).

Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS) is implementing VDKV scheme in the State of Jharkhand. The incomparable last mile
reach through community institutions of women that JSLPS has established, led to the award of this program to it. JSLPS is already implementing MKSP project through which it is supporting thousands of tribal rural families through NTFP based initiatives. In the light of that the same team has been roped in for implementation of VDKs.

The work has commenced and about 39 VDKs are functioning in 21 districts of Jharkhand. Tamarind, karanj, mahua, lac, neem seed, sal, kusum seed, mahua seed, chironji, sal leaf and seed, dumri, dhawalflower, mango, amasi, kundu leaf, bamboo lemongrass and jackfruit are some of the NTFP products which are being processed by the Sakhi Mandal members.

One such VDKs running in Sadar block of Khunti district, where about 300 women farmer have collected their produces of tamarind and lac. Through the VDK, the women have collected around 3127 kg tamarind and 728 kg lac. At the minimum support price of Rs 36 per kg for tamarind and Rs 275 per kg for lac respectively, these are being sold by the Sakhi Mandal members. So far, 6.3 MT tamarind and 1.9 MT lac have been sold.

Rohini Devi, a member of VDK in Alaundi village talking about the changes in her life with VDK said, “Earlier, our economic situation was not good but after joining Van Dhan Vikas Kendra there has been a lot of change. If we continue to get similar work, then we can also move ahead in our lives and educate our children well.”

Rina Kujur, another member of VDK and a resident of the same village, shared, “I usually make lac bangles. However, due to the lockdown I lost my work. Through VDK, I again got the chance to work and have also started earning. It is helping me to manage my family’s needs.”

It is heartening to note that the tribal folks have realized the benefits of their own forest produce. The VDKs have given the rural women the identity of entrepreneur. Now instead of being dependent on others, they have become a pillar of support for their respective family and for one another.

VDKs are generating employment in the villages itself using village resources for the villagers. The initiative is expected to provide enhanced livelihood to about 25 lakh tribal gatherers.
**Fields turning green with Lift Irrigation**

*Lift irrigation has reduced farmers’ dependency on erratic monsoon in Satbarwa block of Palamu district. Now they are cultivating a variety of crops around the year.*

Agriculture is one of the major sources of livelihood in rural Jharkhand. Farmers in the state mostly depend on monsoon for agriculture. This means that most of the agricultural land remains fallow for a large part of the year. The dismal scenario is changing now after the installation of lift irrigation facilities by Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society under the Convergence Programme.

An example of this transformation is to be seen in Satbarwa block. The cropping pattern in this block of Palamu district has totally changed since the installation of lift irrigation structures for irrigating the fields. A total of 82 lift irrigation equipment have been installed in 26 villages of the block benefitting approximately 1000 farmers.

Lift irrigation has reduced the dependency of farmers on electric and diesel motor pumps as the lift operates using solar energy. The farms that remained empty during summers are now green with vegetable plants. The farmers who had to wait earlier for rainfall for planting paddy, are now using lift irrigation for paddy cultivation when there is delay in rainfall. Water user groups have been formed to look after the usage and maintenance of the lift irrigation structures. One lift irrigation structure has the capacity to irrigate about 10 to 15 acres of land.

One of the beneficiaries of lift irrigation scheme, Anjali Devi of Shahganj village says, “Before the installation of lift irrigation our crops used to dry up because of lack of water. We depended completely on rainfall for irrigation. We used to cultivate limited crops during summer season. Most of the fields remained empty. Now I have cultivated maize in two acres of land with the help of lift irrigation. I have also cultivated lady’s finger and chilli. Now our fields look green in every season.”

Sabita Devi of Khamdih village has a similar tale to share. “Earlier we used to cultivate only paddy and wheat, but now we cultivate maize, cucumber, lady’s finger, bitter gourd and other vegetables too. I have also started rearing fish in a small pond nearby. Whenever the pond dries up, we use the lift to fill it with water. Without lift irrigation our life was so different and dismal.”

Dewanti Devi of Rajderwa village, another beneficiary, says, “I have cultivated maize in 1.5 acres of land with the help of lift irrigation. We have started harvesting it. Now we don’t have to spend money on diesel pumps because the lift irrigation runs on solar energy.”

Lift irrigation has changed the agriculture scenario in Satbarwa block by ensuring the availability of irrigation water throughout the year. It has also made farming more cost-effective for the poor farmers who do not need to rely on expensive diesel and electric pumps now.
Women farmers show the way during Pandemic

**Tend to their farms taking all precautions against coronavirus and are reaping the benefits of their hard work.**

Women farmers associated with Sakhi Mandals have defied the constraints place by the pandemic and are setting new examples of success and prosperity with their hard work.

Salita Devi, 25, associated with Mahila Vikas Aajivika Sakhi Mandal resides in Sagrabhanga village of Deoghar district. She is practicing organic farming and earning decent profits. Earlier, however, Salita’s husband alone was farming and they could barely make the ends meet for the family of five with his meagre income.

Salita has seen poverty since childhood but never thought that her circumstances would worsen after marriage. After one year of marriage, Salita gave birth to a boy. But before the couple could figure out something to tackle their financial problems, in 2016 her husband died due to kidney failure. This pushed the family further into poverty. For two years, Salita lived in abject misery with her son.

It was around this time that she learnt about organic farming through her SHG and with the help of AKM working in her village, she further brushed up her knowledge. She then decided to venture into organic farming. Taking advantage of the training provided by the AKM she cultivated chili in an area of 10 decimal in the February 2020. For this she received financial help of ₹3000 from her Sakhi Mandal.

She continued to take care of her crop during the pandemic lockdown. Here again she received help from the Active Women and the AKMs. They provided her all the information on “Panchsutra – the ways of prevention from spread of COVID-19”. Salita ensured she followed all the rules of safety while tending to her farm. The result of her hard work was one quintal of chili that she harvested and earned about ₹30,000 from it in the next two months.

Sharing her experience Salita says that majority of the villagers are farmers but only few of them get good produce. “When farmers like us get the help of AKMs, we receive training in right from the selection of good quality seeds, making organic manure to preparing seed plants in poly-houses and organic farming methods.”

Speaking about her income, Salita Devi says that chili cultivation in only 10 decimals of land has yielded good income. In 2019 too using organic methods increased her paddy production by about two and a half times. This year Salita produced a total of 27 quintals of paddy using SRI Vidhi and organic manure like, Ghanjivamitra, Nimastra, Brahmastra. The produce is expected to fetch around ₹1.5 lakh after sale.
JOHAR to enhanced Livelihood opportunities

Women farmers of Murhu block are setting an example of group farming success using Lift Irrigation. This story is related to a barren patch (in Rabi and Zaid) of Hesal village in Hassa Panchayat of Murhu Block which eventually turned into 21 acres (6.85 hectares) of cultivable land due to the joint efforts of the PG members. This story elaborates on the transformation of this patch from Kharif based paddy cultivation to a fertile field producing seasonal water-intensive cash crops throughout the year.

Lili Purti - The Catalyst

Lili Purti, a local resident of Hesal village acted as the catalyst in planning, mobilising, setting, executing and replicating the plan of Lift Irrigation on a patch in her village. It all started way back in May 2018 when Lili got an opportunity to get associated with Juhi Mahila Mandal. She even helped the drive team to mobilise women to join SHGs. In July 2018, she was elected as an Aajeevika Krishak Mitra (AKM) for her village at the time of formation of Producer Groups in her village.

JOHAR project has worked significantly in the past few years to achieve the goal of Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society. In Khunti district, JOHAR has registered its presence prominently in three out of six blocks. In order to expand its horizon, JOHAR project has facilitated the women of extremely backward areas with its livelihood enhancing interventions across the state. Murhu block of Khunti district is a leading block in terms of interventions, beneficiaries and work penetration.

Lift Irrigation - an introduction

Lift Irrigation popularly known as ‘LI’ is an effort by the Rural Development Department of the Jharkhand Government to bring water to the agriculture fields of marginal farmers in order to...
Sakhi Mandal helps Vimla script a new beginning

Leaving behind the life of migrant workers, Vimla and her husband returned to the village and transformed their lives after becoming associated with the Sakhi Mandal.

“... If you have dedication to fulfill your dreams, no negative forces can obstruct your path to success.” This saying has been proved right by Community Livestock Manager (CLM) Vimla Devi. She is a resident of Piprahi village of Bhondo panchayat in Chandwara block of Koderma district. Before working as CLM, Vimla was the Ajeevika Pashu Sakhi (APS) of her village.

Vimla’s story prior to her association with Sakhi Mandal was one of financial hardship. She was forced to migrate to the city along with her husband in search of livelihood opportunity. Her husband sometimes worked as a daily wage laborer and at times he also worked as a driver. Though Vimla hoped her family’s economic condition would improve by working in the city, it was not so. They could hardly save money as city life is more expensive. Due to her absence from the village for several months her livestock back in village also perished.

When Vimla returned from the city, she became a member of Jyoti Ajeevika Sakhi Mandal. Later, she was selected to work as Ajeevika Pashu Sakhi of her village. Now, she no longer needs to migrate to the city. At present she owns 10 goats, 11 cows, 2 oxen, 2 buffaloes and 15 poultry birds. As the APS, she provides vaccination and deworming services to the livestock in her village.

Her good work, saw Vimla being upgraded from APS to CLM. Now she organizes meetings and provides training to other Pashu Sakhis. She also provides herbal treatment to goats and hens. Her contribution has brought positive changes in the villages. People have become aware about livestock diseases and the precautions they must take to protect their livestock against those diseases. Pashu Sakhis organize Pashu Paathshalas from time to time to spread awareness about livestock related issues through videos and demonstrations.

Vimla faced numerous challenges in her work as a Pashu Sakhi, but she persevered and overcame them to reach where she is today. The villages where she provided service have undulating topography, which makes travelling difficult. Motivating the farmers to take up animal husbandry as a livelihood option and adopt deworming and vaccination practices were also not easy in the beginning.

However today, she has earned fame in the community for the good work she does. The result was that her husband got elected as a member of Panchayat Samiti. Today, Vimla earns Rs 3000 to Rs 3200 per month from her work as CLM and earns a little extra from animal husbandry. From her earnings, Vimla has reconstructed her old house and a new toilet. Today her children study in an English medium school.

Like Vimla, there are many women in the villages of Jharkhand who have successfully transformed their lives after joining Sakhi Mandals.
AKMs come to villagers’ aid during pandemic

Teach them to stay safe while continuing the farm work.

Aajivika Krishak Mitras are playing a vital role to support farmers in agricultural activities during the pandemic. Further, the services they are providing as corona warriors are indispensable for the well-being of the villagers.

Jai Lalita Devi, associated with Maa Mansha Ajeevika Sakhi Mandal, is working as an AKM in her village Belhawand since 2018. Belhawand is a small village located in Koderma district.

Lalita has been working diligently to facilitate her village’s farmers continue with their agricultural activities, especially the women farmers. She is also making a significant contribution as a corona warrior.

Lalita has been training 120 households in organic farming in her panchayat. She provides training to the villagers every fifteen days and continued with it even during the lockdown. Lalita also helps the farmers prepare organic fertilizers, pesticides and seed plants for their fields.

The activities she covers under her services include farmer registration, CMSA activities, training to farmers, support for organic fertilizer and pesticides preparation, and support to farmers in agri-management practices.

Sharing her experience about her work and the rewards she got, Lalita says that initially the farmers faced trouble in continuing with agricultural activities during the stringent lockdown. But as soon as she learnt about “Panchsutra - the ways of prevention from spread of COVID-19”, she began educating the farmers about it and how they can keep themselves and their family safe while working in their fields.

Lalita also trains farmers in organic methods of farming and teaches them to utilize the resources available at home to ensure a good yield. Lalita explains with an example, “Paddy cultivation in 1 acre of land requires chemical fertilizer DAP worth about ₹1500. But to prepare organic manure and pesticides like NADEP, Ghanjivamitra, Nimastra, Bramhastra, etc., with the raw materials available at home or even if the material needs to be purchased, the cost comes to only ₹200 to ₹300. Raw materials such as gram flour, jaggery, neem leaves, cow dung and cow urine are easily available. The use of organic fertilizer manufactured thus has led to enhanced quality of products.

Lalita earns around ₹3000 per month for her services and around ₹1lakh a year from her agricultural products.

Working as an Aajivika Krishak Mitra, taking good care of her family, earning good income from farming with organic methods and helping the farmers of the village, today Lalita has become an inspiration for the women of Belhawand village.