PALASH – Vocal for the Local

PALASH is a JSLPS initiative intended as an umbrella brand for the products manufactured and produced by SHGs. The aim is to provide a common brand value to the diverse output.

Palash also known as the flame of the forest is the state flower of Jharkhand. JSLPS through its various initiatives is working to multiply livelihood opportunities for the women associated with SHGs. In order to expand its horizon and marketing of the finished products, the organization has launched a parent brand ‘PALASH’ to integrate the products manufactured by women entrepreneurs under one head.

Two of the prominent programs under JSLPS, namely Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojna (MKSP) and Non-farm are involved in production, manufacturing, value-addition, packaging and marketing of various products. The need for a centralized branding and marketing policy to promote recognition, uniformity and trust in the existing and potential markets was felt and thus, Palash was born. In the initial phase, 18 products were launched under the brand. This is an initiative by the organization to pitch in the efforts of SHG members as an unique identity of the brand.

Some of the products which are available are jeera phool rice, arhar dal, madua flour, wheat flour, chili powder, lemon grass leaves, kalmedh, tamarind cake, mustard oil, handmade herbal soap, phenyl, face mask, sanitizer, sanitary pads, lemon grass oil, pattal and dona plates. To expand the reach of products, quality and pricing are given special attention. The plan is to spread the reach of these products through 2.37 lakhs Sakhi Mandals along with open competitive market.
In this regards, special attention is being given to each product. For example, jeera phool rice is special rice which is directly taken from Mahuadantar rice mill situated in Latehar district, Arhar dal is an output of CFTRI machines which processes unpolished dal. Organic farming of madua and wheat is being promoted. In Dhalbumpad block, special and hybrid variety of turmeric is being used to prepare turmeric powder which is rich in curcumin content. This variety contains 4% to 5% of curcumin which is considered good for developing immune system of an individual. Lemongrass and essential oils are imported from Lucknow. ‘Krishna’ variety of lemongrass is considered to be one of the best and at present SHG women of Jharkhand are self-reliant in producing this variety. Lemongrass is used as an antioxidant and metabolism booster. Kalmmedh is a unique product grown in blocks of Simdega district. It is used as blood purifier and also acts as liver protector. Tamarind cakes are specially treated in the tamarind processing units under strict quality control without the use of preservatives. Handmade soaps are produced by SHG members of Bokaro, Giridih and Jamtara. These herbal soaps have glycerin, soap base, and essential oils extracted by SHG members. Soaps are available in 3 ranges—50g, 75g and 100g. Khunti district produces lemongrass/tulsi sanitizers which has been a hit during the pandemic. Sanitary pads under Palash-Sangini brand are available in different sizes. Pattal and Dona plates are stitched in Pakur district.

Packaging, Distribution and Sustainability

The finished products are stocked and packaged at Community Agriculture Business Incubation Centre (CABIC) in Hardag (Namkum block of Ranchi). One Stop Facility Center is being opened in various districts to promote better customer relations and retail chain management. The total business of the Sakhi Mandals is around Rs 200 crore and the aim is to increase it to Rs 1500 crore within three years.
Multi-pronged strategy to improve nutritional status of PVTGs

*Nutrition Garden is aimed at dietary diversity and is a step towards malnourishment-free Jharkhand.*

Jharkhand is among the states with very high levels of hunger. The nutritional status of people in general, women and children in particular, is low in the state. Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS), RDD, Government of Jharkhand, through its various projects is working with the objective to improve the nutrition status of rural Jharkhand through dietary diversity.

**Project Udaan**

Out of the 27,68,322 populations (2001 Census) of Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India, 3.1 lakh PVTGs live in the state of Jharkhand, comprising 1% of the total state population. The PVTGs of the state consist of eight different categories – Asur, Birhor, Korwa, Birjiya, Sauriya Paharia, Mal Paharia, Parahiya and Savar. PVTGs have remained the most isolated and disadvantaged indigenous tribal groups and there’s a perceptible reduction in their population. Malnutrition in PVTGs villages and the lack of access of these communities to the social welfare programmes are major concerns. Despite the considerable minerals and other natural resources, the PVTGs in Jharkhand are still deprived of basic amenities.

Project Udaan of JSLPS is exclusively meant for the development of PVTGs of Jharkhand. The aim is to bring them out of extreme poverty and eventually eliminate. This is a pioneering initiative exclusively for the PVTGs across India. One of the major objectives of the project is to ensure adequate nutrition availability in each PVTG household to avert malnutrition among family members especially women and children. A special intervention for promotion of Nutrition Garden has been started under the programme. Different levels of training programmes are being organized at both block and village level to strengthen the knowledge and skills of the PVTG around these interventions. Vermi-compost kits have been provided at zero cost to enable them to make organic fertilizers. No member under the programme needs to invest any capital from their pocket. The programme eventually aims to cover 11
districts of the state. Presently, the project is running in 16 blocks of 8 districts.

**Nutrition-Garden (Poshan-Vatika)**

Nutrition Garden (Poshan Vatika) is one of the projects for improving nutritional status in the state through the promotion of nutrition diversity. Under the initiative, around 8 types of leafy vegetable and creeper seeds are provided in a kit to the targeted families for developing a Poshan Vatika in their backyard/front yard in about 1 to 1.5 decimal of land. A circular model of Nutrition Garden with the use of organic manure is being promoted. The raised beds of the circular model allow easy drainage of water, which protects the vegetables from rotting due to water logging. Some fruit trees like papaya, moringa and lemon can also be planted around the circular beds. Also, the model follows the strategic approach that strives to optimize utilization of resources available at homes. This initiative is expected to bring a major improvement in the health and nutritional status of the rural communities by allowing them to include nutritious food in their daily diet.

Baidi Pahari, 25, is associated with Kamalpur Aajeevika Sakhi Mandal and is a resident of Gad Pahadi village. She is a beneficiary of the nutrition project under Udaan Project. Baidi says, “I am fortunate to be a part of this project. I can now ensure good nutritious meals for my two children.”

Parwati Devi from Parwati Aajeevika Sakhi Mandal and a resident of Tarudag village of Hulsom Panchayat of Chhatarpur block of Palamu district is also a beneficiary. She says, "It is not possible for us to buy vegetables regularly from the market as it is very expensive. We collect Gethi Kanda from the forest, which is a major part of our diet. Now the Nutrition Garden will ensure regular free supply of vegetables to us."

**Dakiya Scheme**

Another prominent scheme for the PVTG families under Project Udaan is Dakiya Scheme. Under it, the beneficiaries are provided 35 kg of rice at their doorsteps each month. The packaging of the rice under Dakiya Scheme is done by the members of Sakhi Mandals. The PVTG families who don’t own a ration card are also being provided 10kg of rice by the administration so that they don’t go hungry. The vulnerable families are listed by the Sakhi Mandals and they are helped by them through Vulnerability Reduction Fund (VRF). About 22,783 families have been covered under the Dakiya Scheme.

**Mahila Kisan Shastikaran Pariyojna (MKSP)**

MKSP is another project of JSLPS that addresses chronic malnutrition among the tribal population. Under this project, SHG members are being given...
training on developing Nutrition Gardens in their backyard/frontyard using 8 types of seeds provided in a kit. About 11,000 families in 6 blocks of 5 districts have so far successfully established Nutrition Gardens in their homes and are getting nutritious food. In three more districts and 7 blocks, Nutrition Garden project will be implemented under the programme. Nutrition Garden provides the SHG members vegetables for around 200 days in a year and that too at no input cost. Indrani Devi, Ursila Devi, Sugo Dhan and Saroj Dhan of Jeevan Jyoti Self Help Group are among the scores of women who received free seeds of vegetables and developed their own Nutrition Gardens. They learnt about this project from their PG in Torar village, Namkum, Ranchi. The women who had only known about commercial farming earlier and kept a part of the yield for family consumption had found it difficult to fulfill their nutritional needs. But now, they are utilizing small patches of lands in their yards to grow vegetables that fulfill their nutritional requirements. Talking about the benefits from the project the women say, “Now with the money that we save, we can also have non-vegetarian food for the protein requirement.”

Women show interest in Nutrition Garden as there is no financial investment required, only some labor. Also, they grow fresh organic vegetables without using chemical pesticide or inorganic fertilizer.

Kusumi Devi associated with Maa Mansa Aajeevika Sakhi Mandal lives in Karrasal village of Palojori block in Deoghar district. A beneficiary of the Nutrition Garden initiative, Kusumi says, "Earlier, inadequate resources and lack of information about farming had prevented me to utilize my land."She now has all the necessary inputs like good quality seeds, organic fertilizers kit, trainings, etc., free of cost. With these resources and information on techniques of farming, she has been able to cultivate her land and in the next few months will be able to provide homegrown nutritious meals to her family.

**Take Home Ration (THR)**

Another innovative project in the state is THR in which SHG members are given the responsibility of supplying nutritious food to the Anganwadis of the state. With the assistance of JSLPS, they are providing nutritious food to children between 6 months to 3 years, pregnant women, lactating women and malnourished children.

Food items that are provided to these vulnerable groups are – rice, pulses, roasted peanuts, jaggery. Members of Village Organizations are responsible for the purchase and packing of the food materials. They ensure hygienic packaging, accurate quantity and timely delivery of the ration.

Phulmani Bodhra of Maskal Gram Sangathan from Gora Toli and Surunda, of Murhu, Khunti, say “THR has provided us dual benefits. Firstly, a mental satisfaction of serving quality food to our community members and secondly, some earnings.”
Sonia Biruwa – the evolution of a confident Bank Sakhi…

Joining the Sakhi Mandal allowed Sonia Biruwa’s multifaceted personality to flower. She is engaged in multiple livelihood activities and is also pursuing higher education today.

Sonia Biruwa along with her husband Arvind Kalunida was a traditional farmer. In fact, farming was their sole means of livelihood in their native village Iligarh, of Kokcho Panchayat in Tatanagar block of West-Singhbhum district, Jharkhand.

The 32-year-old Sonia is a mother of six years old boy. Increasing family responsibilities started affecting the family’s financial stability and they began facing income deficit. Sonia was worried about the future of her son.

In the year 2016, Sonia came to know about Self Help Groups (SHGs). Convinced by the stories of rural women whose lives have changed after joining SHGs, Sonia decided to join it and became a member of Badal Mahila Swayam Sahayata Samuh, running under the fold of Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS).

Initially, Sonia took small loans for meeting her household expenses. This gave her some support of food security. Sonia is an intermediate and because of her active participation in the SHG’s work, she was soon elected as an Active Woman (AW) and was trained for five days in her role and responsibilities.

Sonia’s forward march did not stop here and her efficiency at work took her to new heights. She was selected as a Bank Sakhi and was trained for five days in Rourkela. Sharing her experience Sonia said, “For the first time, I visited a hotel. Before that, I had seen a hotel only from outside.”

Sonia started working as a Bank Sakhi in Canara Bank. Her job is to assist SHG women in banking transactions like filling bank linkage form, opening SHG saving accounts and helping in credit linkage. Now, Sonia has a steady income of Rs. 4,000 per month. She shares, “People think I am a government servant. I feel honored that with money I am also earning respect.”

Sonia is also a district level trainer. She provides training on financial literacy, MCP and also to Bank Sakhis. As a trainer, she earns Rs750 per day.

Sonia was also among the lucky SHG women who were selected for an exposure visit on drip irrigation to Israel. In Israel Sonia learnt how with less water and resources good agriculture is done through drip method. After returning from there, Sonia adopted drip irrigation for her farming. She took a loan of Rs.40,000 from her SHG for the purpose. The returns have been huge. “I earned a profit of about Rs 1,50,000 in four cultivations in my 25 decimals of land. People come to see my field and I feel honored. After the success of drip method in a small piece of land, now I am planning to adopt drip irrigation in one acre of land.”

Rashmi Devi of Sagen Aajeevika Mahila Samuh, said, “Sonia helps us a lot with our banking transactions. Now, we are not afraid of banks. She is really a Sakhi.”

Rohit Raj, Bank Manager, Canara Bank said, “We get assistance from Sonia in many banking works. This makes our work easy and also dealing with SHG members becomes smooth.”

Sonia has today earned self-respect and confidence. But not one to sit on her laurels, she is now pursuing graduation and plans to appear for competitive exams.
A Progressive Farmer is Born

Joining the SHG was the turning point in Rajni’s life. It took her and her husband on the path of progress and innovation.

“In 2016 is the year that changed my life. I never thought that my small decision to join a SHG would bring an enormous change in my life and would be so effective.” These are the words of Rajni Devi, resident of Anigara village of Khunti district situated 50 km away from the state capital Ranchi.

Rajni joined Turtan Self Help Group (SHG) running under the fold of JSLPS in 2016. She gradually escalated her participation and explored various livelihood opportunities. “In the initial days, trust issue was there in the community and they hesitated to take any loan. But slowly they started believing and that worked positively,” says Rajni recalling the days.

Rajni’s husband Harishchandra Munda supported her. In fact, it was Harishchandra who encouraged her to join the SHG. Small savings and inter-loaning helped the family of four. Harish has 15 acres of paternal property in the village, but most of the land was barren. Only 3 to 4 acres were used for paddy cultivation through rain-fed agricultural system. Harishchandra worked as a daily wage labourer in rest of the seasons. He faced seasonal unemployment and that led to hardships for the family.

Post livelihood interventions by JSLPS, the couple shifted to organic farming for seasonal vegetable. In the span of two to three years, they started cultivating multiple crops depending upon the terrain of land.

**Innovative jugaad**

Rajni and her husband faced difficulty in harvesting paddy post cutting. They used to carry it to town for harvesting and incurred extra expenses. They wanted to buy a rice harvesting machine with 10 HP of motor, but could not afford it due to its high price (around Rs 74,000). The couple owned an old diesel generator which had minimal use at their home. In 2018, with the help of local motor mechanic, they transformed the old generator into a rice harvesting machine. This cost them about Rs 21,000 inclusive of all charges and it was the first big loan that Rajni took from her SHG.

This harvesting machine brought farmers of the entire village to their doorstep to get their paddy harvested. The couple charged Re 1 per kilogram for harvesting paddy. Since theirs was the only machine located in the village, it helped all the farmers reduce the transportation cost they had to incur in travelling to the town.

In just an hour, the machine could harvest approximately 300 kg of paddy and the input cost was merely Rs 100. This paddy harvesting machine fetched Rs 200 per hour for the couple. During the first season of harvesting, Rajni repaid the loan amount of Rs 21,000 to the SHG along with the nominal interest.

At present, the couple owns two such harvesting machines and the second one is also remodelled using the same technique.

**Rajni becomes a progressive farmer**

With the passage of time, Rajni upgraded her farming techniques. She installed Micro Drip Irrigation at subsidised rate through JHIMDI project of JSLPS and also implemented various practices like the Package of Practices (PoP), plastic mulching, sprinklers, etc. She also planted paddy with SRI technique and used organic fertilizers and pesticides.

Rajni was constantly supported by Aajeevika Krishak Mitra (AKM) Pushpa Devi of Anigara village in all her endeavours. The couple cultivates a variety of crops today including pulses, paddy, wheat, vegetables and other oil producing crops. They also own a variety of livestock including ducks, poultry and dairy.

Rajni exemplifies the potential of rural economy and depicts the scope for self-sufficiency and economic progress.
Laichi Parahiya is a resident of Satgharwa hamlet of Arar village located in Chhatarpur block of Palamu district. Most of the residents of Satgharwa hamlet belong to Primitive Tribal Groups (PTG) including Laichi. There are six PTG Sakhi Mandals in Satgharwa. Laichi is a member of Parwati Aajeevika Sakhi Mandal and actively takes part in the meetings of her Sakhi Mandal. Looking at her enthusiastic participation she was selected as the Change Maker of her village under the Udaan Project of JSLPS and was given five days training.

Laichi is a true Change Maker. After her selection, she dived into her new role with enthusiasm. She conducted a household survey and was also a part of an entitlement drive of four PTG inhabited villages, namely– Rajderwa, Chepu, Baragunia and Arar. During the entitlement drive, the access of PTG families to different entitlements was recorded. The PTG families are being linked to those entitlements whose benefits are not being availed by them at present. Laichi is helping such households get their ration card made which is an important document to avail the benefit of Dakiya Scheme. Under this scheme, 35kg rice is provided to PTG households each month at their doorsteps. Laichi monitors the accuracy of quantity of rice being delivered to PTG families under Dakiya Yojna.

Laichi is also helping the PTG families avail the benefit of pension scheme especially meant for them. She has constructed a nutrition garden in the front yard of her house and has motivated 40 PTG households of her village to construct it. Laichi was paid an honorarium of Rs 500 per day during household survey and entitlement drive. At present, she receives an honorarium of Rs 200 per day for her work.

Laichi says that by being a member of Sakhi Mandal she has not only helped other PTG families avail various benefits of government schemes, but has also improved her own life. She received 2 lakh fish spawn from the fishery department under the convergence scheme of JSLPS. She has also bought good quality seeds of rice and maize at half price through JSLPS.

Further, due to her good work, Laichi as a proactive Change Maker was invited to interact with honourable Rural Development Minister of India, Mr Narendra Singh Tomar, on the occasion of Women’s Day. She is an agent of change who has not only transformed her own life, but is also transforming the lives of other PTG families.
Breaking societal barriers, scripting entrepreneurial success

Hailing from a traditional community, Savita Devi took a brave decision against the norms and changed the path of her family’s destiny.

Savita Devi from Rampur village of Silli block, Ranchi is among thousands of those women in Jharkhand who are writing stories of their empowerment by breaking societal barriers. Savita belongs to Sahu community, a very traditional group, that does not allow women to set foot out of their houses.

When Savita joined Jai Maa Santoshi Mahila Sakhi Mandal, her husband was wary of how fellow community men would react to it. It was Savita’s brother-in-law who stepped in to convince her husband that it was for the betterment of the family and they shouldn’t stop her. And stepping out proved to be the path to transformation of Savita and her entire family.

No one had known that Savita has an entrepreneurial mind and could use it for the benefit her family. Savita’s husband had a small general store, the income from which was never sufficient for their needs. The family could not afford proper education for the children or cater to any of their demands and needs. The income was just enough for food needs.

After she joined the Sakhi Mandal, Savita took a loan of Rs 42,000 and expanded the general store. She began helping her husband in the store. After repaying the loan, she decided to open up a muri (puffed rice) mill as there was none in the area. Savita saw this as an opportunity and took another loan of Rs 50,000 from her Sakhi Mandal and set up the mill. She handed over the mill to her husband and gave her attention to the general store. As profits increased from the two ventures, Savita opened a small furniture store just beside her general store and took charge of it along with her husband.

Her entrepreneurial mind led Savita to create not one but multiple opportunities of livelihood for her family. From a small general store which was on the verge of closure, she expanded her business to three enterprises. Breaking the societal barriers that confined her within the four walls of her home, Savita stepped out and bravely changed the course of her destiny.

Today, she is also giving employment to the needy members of her Sakhi Mandal in her muri mill and furniture shop. Her journey of empowerment is astounding as she has now mastered the art of dealing with orders over phone and delivering too.

Savita Devi while narrating her life story, says, “There were a lot of disgruntled murmurs around me when I joined the Sakhi Mandal and began actively participating in its activities. While setting up and expanding the business, my husband was worried about what people might say but ultimately, he supported me. Today, I am self-reliant and can cater to the needs of my children. They are studying in private schools and I am happy. I even have some savings in the bank in my name which makes me feel more confident. The people who used to doubt me, today are all praise. I feel that gathering up courage and stepping out was the best decision of my life. The support of my family and my husband played a very important role in my transformation.”
Beating the lockdown blues

When her husband and brother-in-law lost their jobs as daily wage workers during the lockdown, Kiran Devi decided to take up poultry farming

Twenty-eight-year-old Kiran Devi belongs to Khaga village of Palajori Block in Deoghar District. She is associated with Shiv Shakti Aajeevika Sakhi Mandal since 2017. Kiran was struggling for the survival of her family during the lockdown. Her husband and brother-in-law, both daily wage labourers, had lost their jobs due to the breakdown. The plight of her family of seven moved Kiran to take up poultry farming.

For the last three years Kiran’s SHG has provided her support and has been her second family. It again came to her rescue providing her with all the necessary things for poultry business.

Kiran first gathered all the necessary information about poultry farming with the help of Aajeevika Pashu Sakhi (APS). Thereafter, she took a loan of Rs 45,000 from her SHG and purchased 1080 chicken of Sonalika breed. She bought the chicken at the rate of Rs 52 per unit. Her husband and brother-in-law are helping her in this venture. In the next few months, Kiran hopes to earn a profit of around Rs 3 lakhs approximately from her poultry farm.

Sharing her experience, Kiran says, "I had never thought I would be contributing to the family income. But things have changed in the past two years and now I am participating in all the family occupations. My husband gives importance to my opinions now."
Goat Rearing Gives Good Returns

*A sharecropper and goat-rearer, Amravati Devi had lost all hope when her goats died of a mysterious disease. A despondent Amravati finds new life with the help of her Sakhi Mandal.*

Amravati Devi is a resident of Pahadi Kala village of Lesliganj block of Palamu district. She is a member of Anand Aajeevika Sakhi Mandal since 2017. Goat rearing has been Amravati’s chief source of livelihood as she has no land for cultivation. She also does share cropping in a small patch of land owned by a person of her village. Share cropping only provides for her family’s subsistence. In addition, Amravati would earn Rs 3000 to 4000 per goat according to the weight of the goat. Her life was going well till all her goats died of an unknown disease. It was a huge setback for Amravati and she lost all hope.

Moved by her plight, the members of her Sakhi Mandal submitted her name as a beneficiary of Mahila Swawlamban Yojna so that she could avail the benefits of the scheme. Under this scheme in January 2020 Amravati received 1 male and 4 female goats at 100% subsidy through JSLPS. The money for buying the goats was transferred to the account of the Village Organization of Amravati’s village. Amravati along with the members of her VO selected healthy goats and bought them. The goats were also insured under the scheme to minimize the loss, if by chance the goats died.

After receiving goats, Amravati gained confidence to restart goat rearing. Today the number of goats she owns has increased to six and two of her goats are pregnant. Amravati is very grateful to the members of her Sakhi Mandal and to JSLPS who supported her to restart her livelihood.

Amravati is confident that soon her goats will be ready to be sold and she will earn a good sum of money. The insurance gives her additional confidence that just in case her goats died she will not be burdened by loss. Though her goats are healthy at the moment, in case they fall sick she will seek the help of Aajeevika Pashu Sakhi of her village, she says.

Like Amravati, many families have taken up goat rearing as their main source of livelihood and are earning a good sum of money through it.
Breaking the chain of poverty with grit

The unbelievable transformation of Saraswati Devi into a confident Banking Correspondent Sakhi is a story of courage and perseverance. No wonder she is today an ideal for other women in her community.

Saraswati Devi from Ganke village of Ganke block in Ramgarh district is an inspiration for those facing challenges in life. This doughty woman refused to cave in under extreme difficulties. Today, Saraswati Devi is earning a stable income as a Banking Correspondent Sakhi and rendering important banking services. Saraswati lives in a remote part of the district and for her villagers who earlier had to travel a long distance for bank work, she is a life saver. Not only the villagers of her village but also those from nearby villages from around 10km area come to her for their banking needs.

Saraswati also provides door-to-door service to the elderly and disabled villagers. At present, Saraswati deals with transactions of over Rs 10-12 lakh through her Micro ATM machine. These banking services give her a stable monthly income of over Rs 6000-7000.

Life was not always this comfortable for Saraswati. Though a graduate, yet she could not work due to lack of job opportunities in her village. She used to assist her husband in farming. However, Saraswati always felt unhappy being unable to put her education to proper use. Her family and even outsiders taunted her for this.

Saraswati then thought of taking up a course in computer operations in the hope of improving her chances of finding a job. To fulfill her dream, she sold vegetables that she grew and thus paid for the course. Despite completing the course successfully, Saraswati was unable to find any job.

Luck smiled on her in 2017 when she became associated with Aajeevika Project running under the fold of JSLPS. After four months, she got the opportunity to sit for Banking Correspondent Sakhi exam and qualified.

Her husband who was never in favor of her joining the Sakhi Mandal, when she passed the exam for Banking Correspondent Sakhi and asked him for money for initial input, refused. Undaunted, Saraswati turned to her Sakhi Mandal for a loan. Adding her personal saving to the loan, she bought herself a laptop which is essential for banking operations.

In a span of three years, Saraswati has managed to bring about sweeping changes in her economic and social status. She is no longer dependent on her husband and in fact, is contributing to the family kitty. Her husband is today proud of Saraswati’s achievement and the recognition she has got in the community.

Saraswati though still assists her husband in farming and is helping him to develop it into a prominent livelihood option.

Saraswati has become an ideal for other women of her village who have witnessed her transformation from being a timid, helpless housewife to a strong independent woman.

Talking about her journey, Saraswati Devi brims with confidence as she says, “We need to be always hopeful and positive about life. It totally depends on our actions where life would lead us. Becoming a Banking Correspondent Sakhi transformed my life completely. I am happy now that my education has been put to some use and is being utilized for the welfare of my community and people. I have got social and economic empowerment through my occupation and am recognized as a strong confident woman. What more can I ask? There are many women like me who have dreams in their eyes and want to carve an identity of their own. All that is required is a little guidance and lots of self-confidence and courage. Joining the Sakhi Mandal was the best decision of my life as it provided me all the possible support whenever needed. I consider it played a big part in establishing my identity as BC Sakhi and becoming a successful person.”
1. **Appreciation for the Hard work**

This Independence Day, 3 sakhi mandals of Khunti district were awarded by DC Khunti on behalf of District Administration. Kamal mahila mandal, Khunti was awarded appreciation certificate for serving 3 times meals to Covid patients and frontline warriors throughout the lockdown and unlock period. Whereas, sapna mahila mandal, Torpa and Anurag Mahila Mandal, Arki were awarded appreciation for performing best practice of Panchsutra and running Mukhya Mantri Didi Kitchen at panchayat level. These SHG also holds the top position in terms of spreading social awareness and each member are insured under PM Suraksha Beema Yojna and PM Jeevan Jyoti Yojna. Altogether 15 sakhi mandals were awarded at district and block level.

2. **State promotes mango cultivation as employment avenue**

Mango plantation is being carried out throughout Jharkhand under Birsa Harit Gram Yojna, which is thus providing employment to the rural people in their villages. The Sakhi Mandal Members are also being employed as Baagwani Sakhis to look after the technical aspects of mango cultivation. In Palamu district mango cultivation has been completed in 556 acres of land. To monitor the mango cultivation, 226 Baagwani Sakhis have been selected throughout for each five acre of cultivation area.

A one-day training of Baagwani Sakhis was organized by JSLPS, in which the trainees leaned about different aspects of mango cultivation, like the size of the pit for planting mango saplings, distance between the plants in the orchard, use of different pesticides and insecticides etc. They were apprised about the different measures to protect the mango plants from animals and the importance of Jal Kunds that need to be constructed in the mango orchards for watering the plants.

The Baagwani Sakhis have been assigned the work of regular monitoring of the mango orchards and to keep the administration informed about the condition of the orchards.