



Compendium of
**Success
Stories**
of Shree Anna Abhiyan



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Published on : 10th November, 2025

At **International Symposium on Shree Anna and Woman Farmer 2025**

Convention Centre, Loka Seva Bhavan, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

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Government of Odisha



MESSAGE

Millets have been integral to Odisha's agricultural heritage from ancient times, mentioned in Vedic texts like the Yajurveda and Atharvaveda as sacred grains. Across the state, diverse millet cultivation evolved — finger millet in Koraput's highlands among tribal communities, and sorghum, pearl millet, and foxtail millet in western districts like Kalahandi, Nuapada, Bolangir, and Bargarh. These regions sustained rich traditions of millet-based food practices vital to local nutrition and cultural identity.

However, colonial agricultural policies favouring cash crops like cotton and jute, followed by agricultural modernisation, drastically marginalised millet cultivation. Recognising this loss, the Government of Odisha launched the Shree Anna Abhiyan to boost production, conserve traditional varieties, and integrate millets into public nutrition schemes. This revival demonstrates how traditional knowledge combined with modern policy can restore climate-resilient crops that strengthen nutrition security and promote sustainable agriculture.

The Hon'ble Prime Minister calls millets "Shree Anna" to signify their importance as a superfood and source of farmer prosperity. The Hon'ble Chief Minister recognises Shree Anna as vital for health, food security, and climate resilience, promoting the Shree Anna Abhiyan to establish Odisha as India's millet hub.

Women farmers have been the backbone of millet cultivation in Odisha, preserving traditional varieties and sustaining food security through generations. The UN's declaration of 2026 as the International Year of Women Farmers provides timely recognition of their invaluable agricultural contributions.

This compendium presents success stories of women millet farmers and entrepreneurs in Odisha - an indication to empowerment and progress. These narratives showcase resilience, knowledge, and determination that have transformed lives and inspired sustainable farming practices and thriving enterprises.

My heartfelt congratulations to all contributors, especially the women whose stories inspire hope and reaffirm Odisha's leadership in agricultural innovation and women's empowerment.

Bande Utkala Janani

(K. V. Singh Deo)

Dr. Arabinda Kumar Padhee, IAS

Principal Secretary
Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment
Government of Odisha



MESSAGE

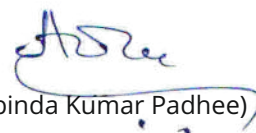
Odisha's millet promotion through the Shree Anna Abhiyan recognises millets as climate-smart, nutrient-rich crops essential for sustainable agriculture. Our initiatives include cultivation, processing, and marketing, creating income opportunities for farmers. Women have emerged as key drivers of this movement, leveraging their knowledge and entrepreneurship to transform millet into a catalyst for social and economic development.

The state's rich agrobiodiversity reflects generations of farmers preserving diverse landraces adapted to varied ecosystems. Women farmers, as traditional custodians of seed knowledge, have been instrumental in selecting, saving, and sharing seeds across generations. Traditional seeds are integral to Odisha's cultural and ecological heritage. By strengthening local seed systems and community seed banks, we conserve indigenous varieties while ensuring access to climate-resilient and nutritious crops. Women's active participation in seed conservation maintains genetic diversity and preserves traditional agricultural knowledge, safeguarding biodiversity and enhancing food and livelihood security for future generations.

The stories in this book demonstrate how empowering women farmers create holistic growth for families and communities. Through improved agricultural practices, value addition and market linkages, these women prove that rural development succeeds when women are central to it.

The International Symposium on Shree Anna and Woman Farmer 2025 celebrates this Journey, honoring our heritage while positioning Odisha as a leader in millet-based food security and women-led enterprises.

I appreciate all teams, partners, and stakeholders who contributed to this publication. Most importantly, I salute the women whose inspiring stories reflect courage, commitment and vision. This compendium serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, researchers and communities, motivating us to strengthen women's roles in agriculture and build a sustainable future for all.



(Dr. Arabinda Kumar Padhee)

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FOREWORD

Over the last few years, Odisha has emerged as a pioneer in millet promotion, recognising its potential to strengthen nutritional security, enhance climate resilience, and boost rural livelihoods. Central to this success are the women farmers who have adopted millet cultivation and related enterprises with determination. Their leadership has been instrumental in developing value chains that link traditional wisdom with modern markets.

Millet-based livelihoods have brought new economic opportunities to rural communities. Women have led the way, not just in cultivation, but also in processing, value addition, and marketing through community enterprises and self-help groups. These efforts have generated income, strengthened local food systems, and encouraged a renewed pride in indigenous crops. From running millet cafes and processing units to producing value-added products such as flour, snacks, and healthy foods, women entrepreneurs are redefining rural enterprise and inspiring the next generation to view agriculture as a sustainable livelihood. Beyond economic gains, millet cultivation contributes to sustainable land use, enhances biodiversity, and preserves the rich agrobiodiversity of Odisha, including traditional seed varieties passed down through generations.

This publication offers a glimpse into the journeys of women who have turned challenges into opportunities. It showcases how collective action and innovation are helping women to become decision-makers, entrepreneurs and changemakers. Their contribution is uplifting their families and shaping a more inclusive rural economy. The International Symposium on Shree Anna reflects Odisha's deep commitment to reviving traditional crops while placing women's empowerment at the centre of agricultural growth.

I commend every woman featured in this book for her perseverance and vision. I believe their stories will continue to inspire policies and partnerships that strengthen women-led sustainable farming and the promotion of millet-based livelihoods across Odisha, creating a resilient, nutritious and prosperous future for rural communities.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'SL' with a horizontal line underneath.

(Shubham Saxena)



INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON

**SHREE ANNA &
WOMAN FARMER**

2025



*Role of Women in Agriculture Heritage and
Conservation of Agrobiodiversity*



About International Symposium on Shree Anna and Woman Farmer 2025

The Shree Anna Abhiyan, under the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, Government of Odisha, is hosting the International Symposium on Shree Anna and Woman Farmer (ISSWF 2025). Scheduled for 10th and 11th November 2025, the event will mark the celebration of Mandia Dibasa and centre on the theme "Role of Women in Agriculture Heritage and Conservation of Agrobiodiversity."

Millets have long been central to Odisha's food culture and farming systems. For generations, they have sustained tribal and rainfed communities while conserving the state's agroecological heritage. To honour this legacy, the Government of Odisha has declared 10th November as Mandia Dibasa (Millet Day), celebrated every year to recognise the cultural, nutritional, and ecological importance of millets.

Mandia Dibasa is not only about reviving traditional food practices but also about highlighting Odisha's leadership in millet promotion. It reflects the state's commitment to climate-resilient farming, food and nutrition security, and rural livelihoods through the Shree Anna Abhiyan.

Millets are climate-resilient and rich in nutrition. As climate change intensifies, millets are increasingly recognised as a hope for the future. These crops are mainly grown by small and marginal farmers, most of them women, who play a crucial role in seed preservation, crop management, and local food traditions.

Rooted in the vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India to reposition millets (Shree Anna) in national diets, the Government of Odisha launched the Shree Anna Abhiyan programme. It combines traditional knowledge with modern approaches in 177 rainfed blocks across 30 districts of Odisha to support these farming communities.

The main goals of Shree Anna Abhiyan are to increase household millet consumption and revive traditional millet-based food cultures. It also aims to conserve and promote indigenous millet landraces. The programme encourages decentralised processing and value addition through Women Self Help Groups (WSHGs) and Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs). It focuses on improving productivity in millet-based crop systems and ensuring millet inclusion in PDS and other government schemes. Women farmers are at the heart of this initiative, leading community-based enterprises, managing seed centres, operating millet processing units, and creating new livelihood opportunities through local food businesses. The initiative is carried out at the grassroots level by WSHGs and women-led FPOs, with support from civil society groups.



UN-FAO and WFP have recognised the programme as one of the best practices for replication in India and Africa under South-South Collaboration. The Government of India and NITI Aayog have also recommended Shree Anna Abhiyan as a model for millet promotion to other state governments.

Odisha's agrobiodiversity and agri-heritage are deeply rooted in its diverse landscapes, traditional farming practices, and indigenous knowledge systems. The state has 10 distinct agro-climatic zones, delineated by variations in soil types, rainfall patterns, topography, and cropping systems across its districts. From the millet-rich uplands of tribal districts to the paddy fields, pulses, oilseeds, medicinal plants, and a wealth of neglected and underutilised species, the state's farming communities have nurtured an extraordinary genetic repository over centuries. This heritage is preserved through community seed banks, festivals, and rituals that honour the earth, sustaining not only crop diversity but also food culture, local economies, and ecological resilience. Women farmers, in particular, have been the custodians of these traditions, protecting local varieties, ensuring food diversity, and transmitting farming knowledge across generations. Their deep connection to land and seed makes them central to Odisha's biodiversity-based agriculture.

The global context adds further significance to this symposium. The United Nations has declared 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer, recognising women's vital contributions to agriculture and calling for greater action on gender equality and empowerment. Women farmers are not only producers but also innovators, decision-makers, and change agents who shape sustainable food systems.

By linking Odisha's Mandia Dibasa with the forthcoming International Year of the Woman Farmer, this symposium aims to amplify grassroots voices, encourage global dialogue, and showcase Odisha as a pioneer in promoting inclusive, resilient, and biodiversity-rich food systems.

The symposium will bring together farmers, experts, civil society organisations, doctors, policymakers, researchers, and international organisations to share experiences and discuss strategies for strengthening women's leadership in agriculture. Sessions will highlight innovations in millet promotion, conservation of indigenous varieties, value chain development, gender-responsive policies, and the empowerment of women as stewards of agrobiodiversity and champions of rural transformation.

ISSWF 2025 aims to promote a sustainable food system. It seeks to highlight the pivotal role of women farmers in conserving agro-biodiversity, strengthening seed systems, and leading community transformation. Through discussions on nutrition security, sustainable food systems, and gender-responsive policy frameworks, the event aspires to build a resilient, equitable, and health-oriented agricultural ecosystem in Odisha and beyond.



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Koraput



1

Woman Farmer with Disabilities Sets Example

She cannot speak or hear, yet she refuses to sit idle and fights against the odds by breaking the unwritten rules that society has set for people with disabilities. Determined to live without being a burden on anyone, she has set an example for other single women in her and surrounding villages through hard work. With the support of the Shree Anna Abhiyan, she has become self-reliant. Despite her disabilities, she has adopted agriculture as a profession. The sight of ripened finger millet crops in her field brings a smile to her face.

Every morning, Sukuri starts her day before sunrise and walks to her field with confidence. She carefully looks after her millet crop, working with patience and dedication. When she returns home in the evening, tired but happy, the villagers admire her hard work. Sukuri has turned her silence into strength and her field bountiful.

Sukuri Odari, 35, from Daliguda village in the Lamtaput block of Koraput district, has been successfully cultivating finger millet for over three years. She learned the System of Millet Intensification (SMI) through training under the Shree Anna Abhiyan, with additional support from her sister-in-law, on improved agronomic practices. Today, she independently cultivates finger millet on two acres of dry upland. In 2024-25, she harvested 25 quintals, selling 15 quintals at the Mandi and earning over Rs 67,500. She follows SMI techniques and applies bio-inputs.

In addition to finger millet cultivation, Sukuri earns between Rs 6,000 and Rs 10,000 from sewing work. The Odisha government is promoting millets to reintroduce them into our diet. Farmers are receiving training on the package of practices to increase production, and Sukuri has made significant progress after attending such training. Those who once mocked or teased Sukuri because of her disabilities are now astonished by her success. Following her parents' demise, Sukuri has diligently worked to support herself instead of becoming a burden on her brother and sister-in-law.

Her sister-in-law says, "Sukuri has been unable to speak or hear since childhood, and villagers have often teased her, doubting her ability to lead an independent life. However, millet cultivation has opened up a new way of life for her, allowing her to prove her strength and determination. Today, she stands as a role model in our village, earning respect and admiration for her hard work and resilience."





Malkangiri

2

Mandia Makes Tula Self-Reliant

Four years ago, her husband became paralysed, and suddenly the life of Tula Dalei, 38, a mother of two children, was turned upside down. They live in Rampur village in Chitrakonda block of Malkangiri district, a remote area where access to healthcare and livelihood opportunities remain challenging for most families. The day of the incident remains etched in her memory, her husband, once the sole breadwinner who would leave early for the fields and return at dusk, was suddenly bedridden, dependent on her for every need. The responsibility of caring for him, ensuring her children continued their education, and managing household expenses all fell on her shoulders. She had never worked in the fields independently, had no source of income, and the future seemed impossibly bleak. After that unforeseen incident, Tula overcame all the obstacles through strong willpower to live and take care of her family. And through this, she created a special identity for herself with the support of the Shree Anna Abhiyan.

After her husband's paralysis, she was very depressed and kept thinking about her children's education and how she would take care of the family. When she didn't know what to do, she decided to take up agriculture. She started cultivating finger millet through the System of Millet Intensification (SMI) after attending training imparted by officials of the Shree Anna Abhiyan. Earlier, her husband used to cultivate finger millet using the traditional method, producing 10-12 quintals from five acres. By attending the training organised under the Shree Anna Abhiyan, she learned the preparation of bio-inputs, the correct way of seed sowing, line transplantation, weeding, etc., and implemented these in her cultivation. She has immensely benefited from growing finger millet.

She has been cultivating finger millet on five acres of land and has become self-reliant. Last year, the yield from the five acres was 30 quintals which she sold 20 quintals at the Mandi. In FY 2024-25, she earned Rs 90,000 by selling the produce at the MSP (Rs 4500 per quintal). She kept the remaining 10 quintals for household consumption. With the earnings, she has been running the family and taking care of her husband.

She conserves seeds for finger millet cultivation. Last year, she also used her own seeds to cultivate finger millets. She has given more importance to finger millet cultivation after getting support from the Shree Anna Abhiyan. Apart from this, she has also attended recipe training held under the SAA. Following this, she has been preparing finger millet rasagola, mudki, and other traditional recipes, including Manduru, and selling them at food festivals. For this, she has been selected and awarded at the Bodapada Food Festival in Malkangiri.

About her ordeal and success, she says, "Those were the darkest days of my life when my husband became paralysed. My life's only goal was to take care of my husband and take the responsibilities of my children and the family. Millet helped me. Every day, I serve millet porridge to my husband as per the doctor's instructions. The children and I also consume finger millet at home. The Shree Anna Abhiyan has been supporting many women like me in rural areas. Earlier, selling finger millet was a major issue. But after the Mandi system was introduced by the Shree Anna Abhiyan, it has been very easy and profitable for us."





Kandhamal



3

Women's Collective Turns Fallow Land into Millet Fields

What was once a stretch of unused, barren land at Manipadar village in Odisha's Kandhamal district has now become a source of livelihood for a group of women. They are from three self-help groups, Maa Ambika, Maa Tulasi, and Dharanidevi, who decided to rewrite their future by doing what many had abandoned, i.e. cultivating millets. Their initiative began when the women came together to discuss how they could use the fallow land lying idle in their village. With encouragement from the Shree Anna Abhiyan, they took collective ownership of these unused patches and decided to revive them through millet farming. Supported by the programme, they turned adversity into opportunity and fallow land into flourishing millet fields.

Thirty women farmers came together and cultivated more than 40 acres of previously unused upland. With training in sustainable practices like the System of Millet Intensification and access to high-quality seeds,

their harvest grew, not just in size, but in value. From an initial harvest of 110 quintals from 20 acres in KMS 2023-24, they expanded their area and reaped 157 quintals this year (KMS 2024-25). Keeping 22 quintals for their own families, they sold the rest at the local mandi, earning over Rs 6 lakh. For KMS 2025-26, the women's groups are determined to expand millet cultivation to more fallow land in their area. They expect to achieve higher yields, better prices, and greater recognition for their work.

This newfound income hasn't just changed their households; it has transformed their identity. Once dependent, these women are now entrepreneurs, leaders, and role models in their community. They say that working together has been the key to their success, as collective effort gave them the confidence and strength to face challenges that none could have handled alone. Their influence extends beyond farming, they also manage a Custom Hiring Centre, helping other farmers in their community access tools, timely resources, and much-needed support to improve their own agricultural practices.

About their journey, Pushpanjali Kuanr, President of Maa Tulasi SHG, says, *"I have been involved in millet farming since my childhood. Earlier, we faced many challenges in cultivating millets. After receiving support from the Shree Anna Abhiyan, we united to take up millet cultivation seriously. It has helped us meet our family needs and walk the path of self-reliance. We struggled to run our households in the past, but millet farming has brought financial stability to all our families. Millet now grows on once-barren fields, bringing a glow of joy to the faces of SHG women. We have continued our hard work in the fields, and now other farmers in the village are inspired to adopt millet cultivation after seeing our success."*





Mayurbhanj



4

Subasa's Inspiring Journey as 'Mandia Maa'

Smt. Subasa Mohanta, a resilient 45-year-old farmer from Singarpur village in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district, transformed her life through her dedication to millet farming. Once a struggling paddy farmer, she often faced repeated crop failures and long, exhausting days as a farmhand, which sometimes left her family hungry.

Her turning point came in 2018 with the introduction of the Shree Anna Abhiyan. Determined to change her circumstances, Subasa adopted millet cultivation, starting with just 250 grams of finger millet (*ragi* or *mandia*) seeds on half an acre (0.2 hectare) of fallow land. Her commitment and use of the System of Millet Intensification (SMI) method paid off, yielding an impressive 8 quintals of ragi from that single acre, three times higher than her paddy returns.

In 2019, a participatory varietal trial (PVT) was conducted on her field with 10 finger millet varieties under the Shree Anna Abhiyan. Motivated by this experience, she continued cultivating different varieties the following year. She also collected seeds of other millets, including little millet, foxtail, pearl, sorghum, and barnyard millet, from different districts. With these, she established a millet garden showcasing diverse varieties. Farmers from the nearby blocks and school students visited the millet garden for learning and exposure. During village awareness campaigns to increase household-level millet consumption, she gave training on improved agricultural practices and seed conservation across the block. The local facilitating agency and the Block Agriculture Office extended support for her work.

As word spread, members of other self-help groups began buying seeds from her and started their own millet cultivation. Subasa attended various state and national workshops as a resource person, imparting training on seed conservation and improved agronomic practices.

Today, she is fondly known as "*Mandia Maa*" (Millet Mother). Her efforts have inspired many women farmers to adopt millet cultivation as a sustainable and profitable livelihood alternative. Farmers from Mayurbhanj and neighbouring districts often seek her advice on agronomy practices, bio-input preparation, seed treatment, and value addition.

Now a key champion and brand ambassador for millet promotion in Odisha, Subasa has conserved 10 traditional millet varieties (Bhairabi, Arengu, Srichaitanya, Borasi, Richka, Jahna, Sana Mandia, Bada Mandia, Similipal Mandia and Dasari Mandia) and regularly trains farmers and Anganwadi workers on SMI techniques and millet-based enterprises. Her achievements have received national recognition. She represented Odisha at the Global Conference on Millets 2023, where she interacted with the Prime Minister, and was invited to the G20 Leaders' Summit the same year to share her insights on transforming millet farming.

Subasa's journey stands as both an inspiration and an example of women's leadership in agriculture.





Koraput

5

Dr. Raimati Ghiuria: From Koraput to G20

Dr. Raimati Ghiuria, a 36-year-old tribal woman from the Bhumia community, has become a symbol of leadership and resilience in Odisha's Koraput district. Hailing from Nuaguda village in Kundra block, she is popularly known as the "Millet Queen" for her unwavering commitment to conserving traditional crops, empowering farmers, and creating sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Dr. Ghiuria's association with the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation sparked her interest in agrobiodiversity. She became deeply involved in reviving traditional rice and millet varieties, recognizing their nutritional, cultural, and ecological value. Over time, she emerged as a community resource person and trainer, guiding farmers in sustainable agricultural practices and promoting the cultivation of traditional crops.

As a custodian farmer, Dr. Ghiuria has conserved more than 72 indigenous rice varieties and over 30 millet varieties. She actively participated in the Shree Anna Abhiyan and large-scale landrace evaluation trials with Indian Institute of Millet Research. Many of the varieties she safeguarded have outperformed high-yielding varieties in farmers' fields, leading to their official release by the Government of Odisha after scientific evaluation.

Her leadership extends beyond conservation. As chairperson of Bamandei Farmers Producer Company Ltd, she has helped farmers market their produce effectively. The company now manages processing and post-harvest units, operates millet-based tiffin centres, and produces bio-inputs for its members. Since 2012, she has also anchored a farm school in Kundra block, training more than 2,500 farmers in practices such as system of millet intensification, line transplanting, intercropping, and organic pest management. Her work has inspired many tribal women to see agriculture not just as subsistence, but as a path to growth and dignity.

Dr. Ghiuria helped build awareness on maintaining Fair Average Quality (FAQ) standards for ragi procurement and guided farmers through the registration process to sell their ragi in the mandi at the Minimum Support Price (MSP). Her efforts have received widespread recognition. She was part of the team awarded the Genome Saviour Community Award in 2012 and has been honoured with the Jamsetji Tata National Virtual Academy Fellowship in 2015, Best Farmer Awards from TATA Steel in 2015, 2017 and 2018, the Best Farmer Award by ICAR-IISWC, Sunabeda in 2016, and the Inspiring Woman of the Year award by the Central University of Odisha. Dr. Ghiuria also serves on the state landrace varietal release committee.

Dr. Raimati Ghiuria, who has long championed the revival of traditional grains, has been recognised with several honours: in December 2024, she was awarded an honorary doctorate by President Droupadi Murmu during the convocation of the Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology, and on 9 August 2025, Berhampur University conferred upon her the Doctor of Science degree, further acknowledging her remarkable contributions as a tribal farmer and custodian of millet farming traditions. Dr. Ghiuria is one among the very few to represent Odisha in the G20 Summit in New Delhi in 2023 and speak about the remarkable story of her millet farming mission in Koraput district.

Looking ahead, Dr. Ghiuria envisions scaling up millet value addition and processing through her FPO, expanding access to drudgery-reducing implements for women farmers, and strengthening seed production and supply systems for landraces.





Koraput

6

Nari Sakti FPO Boosts Tribal Livelihoods with Millet

When the Shree Anna Abhiyan programme was initiated by the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, it brought an opportunity for many organisations like the Koraput Nari Sakti Farmers Producers Company Limited, based in Lamtaput block, to thrive. The Farmers Producers Organisation (FPO) has a total of 4,725 shareholders, engaged in mandi hosting and the marketing of vegetables and livestock.

Initially, the FPO faced difficulty in convincing women farmers to become members. Lamtaput is a tribal-dominated block, and women usually do not go out except for household work. Therefore, the founding members had to talk to the husbands and families to convince them of the benefits of being stakeholders in the FPO. Traditional gender roles in the tribal community kept women away from commercial farming activities. The founding members went door-to-door and held village meetings to explain how the FPO

could improve family incomes. Many families hesitated to let women attend meetings or travel to mandis. The breakthrough came when the founders shared success stories from other areas. They showed how membership could benefit entire families while women continued their household work. Building trust took patience and several months of community engagement. Once the first few women joined and saw results, others followed. Word-of-mouth helped membership grow as families saw the benefits of collective farming and marketing.

The programme has provided the women-led FPO with the opportunity to host the millet mandi for the past four years. Introduction of technologies like SMI (System for Millet Intensification) and LT (Line transplanting) has significantly increased production from three quintals to 12 quintals per acre over the years. This surge has sparked interest among tribal communities to cultivate millet on a larger scale.

Given the five-fold increase in production in tribal areas, establishing market linkages became imperative. Previously, local vendors would purchase produce for Rs. 12-15 per kg, which was demoralising for the community considering the effort invested. SAA played an important role in establishing the millet mandi, facilitating farmers to sell their produce within their block at a Minimum Support Price. Simultaneously, it provided an opportunity for the FPO to host the mandi in their area. In the first year, the MSP was Rs. 2897 per quintal, which was increased to Rs. 3846 per quintal for the KMS 2023-24.

In the first year (KMS 2020-21), when the FPO acted as the procurement agency, they were able to aggregate and supply around 10,043 quintals of millet to TDCCOL. This figure increased to 31,718 quintals in the KMS 2023-24, amounting to around Rs. 11.34 crore realised by the farmers. In the KMS 2024-25, they procured 41,000 quintals. As a result, approximately 1,800 women farmers saw their income rise to an average of Rs. 30,000 – Rs. 40,000 compared to the earlier realisation of Rs. 12,000 – Rs. 15,000 per acre.

Ms. Maina Krisani, Chairperson of Nari Sakti Farmers Producers Company Limited, says, *“Earlier, we relied on the sale of vegetables from our shareholders, which was insufficient to sustain our FPO financially. SAA’s support, including funding for our human resource costs, office expenses, house rent, and godown costs, has been invaluable. Hosting the mandi has been a significant boost for us, bringing profit to the FPO. In the last financial year, we received Rs. 11,34,870 (1% of sales value) as hosting charges, which we plan to reinvest in the value addition of our products.”*





Ganjam



7

Jochna Swain's Millet Journey

Jochana Swain, a 44-year-old farmer from Gudiapatan village in Sanakhemundi block of Ganjam, has emerged as a model millet cultivator in her community. For years, she and her husband grew paddy mainly for household consumption. Farming in the village was never seen as a reliable source of income, as erratic rainfall and rising temperatures often destroyed crops. "Some years, we barely had enough paddy to eat. There was no money left for anything else," Jochana recalled.

Her journey began to change in 2024 when she attended a training programme organized by the local NGO, Ishaneswara Yuvak Sangha (IYS). Here, she learned about improved agronomic practices, including the System of Millet Intensification (SMI), Line Transplantation, and Line Sowing methods. "The training gave me confidence. I realised that with the right methods, millet can give us good returns," she shared.

Guided by IYS, Jochana prepared her land with compost, treated seeds with Beejamruta, and raised a

seedbed before transplanting. These practices not only strengthened crop resilience but also rejuvenated the soil. "After a few months, I noticed earthworms returning to the fields and the soil becoming darker and more fertile. It was a sign that the land was alive again," she said. The enhanced soil fertility and improved moisture retention made her crops healthier and more productive.

In 2024–25, she cultivated ragi on six acres using the SMI method, harvesting 38 quintals. She reserved four quintals for household consumption and sold the remaining 34 quintals at the local mandi, earning Rs. 1,53,000, with each quintal fetching the Minimum Support Price of Rs. 4,500. "Earlier, we grew paddy only for food, not for income. Now, I see millet farming as a livelihood that can sustain my family," Jochana said. Under the traditional broadcasting method, her yield was just 2 to 2.5 quintals per acre. With SMI, it has increased to 5–7 quintals per acre.

The economic impact has been significant. Jochana has been able to invest in her family's needs, including her children's education, and contribute to community activities. *"Millets have changed our lives. They give us both food and income. And the soil is healthier than ever, I feel like the land itself is rewarding us,"* she added with a smile.

Jochana's success is more than personal, it is a beacon for her village. Her journey from subsistence paddy farming to earning a stable income from ragi shows how knowledge, innovation, and resilience can transform livelihoods. By embracing millet cultivation under the SMI method, she is not only securing her family's future but also inspiring others to follow a sustainable and profitable path, while revitalizing the land itself.





Balangir



8

Shyama SHG Transforms into Millet Entrepreneurs

In Balangir district, 11 women with grit and determination formed the Shyama Self Help Group in 2004. The women came together after realising they all faced the same problem, limited opportunities to earn money and the need to feel financially well. They saw that by supporting one another, they could grow stronger and earn better. This led them to form a Self-Help Group (SHG). For nearly two decades, they managed rice distribution under the Public Distribution System. The work brought them income and stability, but opportunities to grow were limited. By 2022, they were looking for ways to expand their business and build a more sustainable livelihood.

Their turning point came in 2023 when the Mission Shakti department invited groups to run Millet Shakti Cafes under the Shree Anna Abhiyan. Shyama SHG's record of discipline and enterprise helped them get selected. With support from SAA, the SHG received infrastructure such as a building, kitchen equipment,

and appliances. They received financial support of Rs.50,000 under SAA to establish it. Training and exposure visits helped the women master millet-based recipes ranging from cakes and cookies to rotis, momos, chow mein, and pithas. Their cafe soon became a local favourite, attracting customers who valued healthy and creative meals.

The women knew that spreading awareness was important for their success. So, the SHG started a campaign in their village. They went from house to house, telling families about the health benefits of millet-based foods. They gave out small samples of millet snacks, shared easy recipes, and explained how millets could improve digestion, and health. They also held small tasting events in nearby areas so people could try and enjoy different millet dishes themselves.

In 2024, sales crossed Rs 12 lakh rupees, with a profit margin of 35 percent. Presently the average income is Rs 1.20 lakh per month. The group showcased their products at district, state, and even national events, gaining visibility and recognition. Their efforts won them awards at both district and state levels during the International Symposium on Shree Anna and Forgotten Foods 2024 in Bhubaneswar, as well as the Best WSHG Award at the regional symposium.

Their growth in revenue happened because of several smart steps. First, they expanded their product list, adding new food items like millet momos, chow mein, and continental dishes that attracted young people. Second, they made sure every item tasted good and had the same quality. Third, they started a catering service for local events, offices, and parties, which helped them get big orders. Fourth, they used social media and word-of-mouth to promote their business. Fifth, they took part in exhibitions and fairs, which helped them sell more and make their café known.

The impact went far beyond money. Running the cafe gave these women dignity, confidence, and an identity as entrepreneurs. They became role models for other women in the community, proving that perseverance and teamwork could turn small beginnings into thriving enterprises.

Supriya Kuanr, the president of Shyama SHG, says, *“Our cafe is more than a business for us. It is our pride, our chance to stand on our own feet, and our way to serve our community with good food and good health.”*





Kalahandi



9

Sky is the Limit for Kalyani SHG

Pushpa Shukla lives in the Bhawanipatna block of Kalahandi district, Odisha. Her life was deeply intertwined with her children and family. She hailed from a well-to-do family and nurtured a desire to carve out her own identity. With the support of her family, Pushpa embarked on a journey that not only transformed her life but also empowered many other women in her locality.

Pushpa's aspirations led her to make a significant decision – to form a self-help group (SHG) along with a few other women. Armed with determination and guided by an Anganwadi worker, she learned the process of starting a group and opening a bank account. This marked the beginning of a journey that would change her life and the lives of the women who became part of the SHG.

In April 2003, with 10 women, Pushpa founded the Kalyani SHG. Their journey began with a modest monthly contribution of Rs 100, focusing on providing catering services during Sarpanch meetings. The returns from

these services were promising, and the group aspired for greater ventures. Their determination led them to approach the offices of Mission Shakti and Shree Anna Abhiyan. The group's commitment was rewarded when they secured a tender to open the Millet Shakti Outlet in 2023.

This new venture was the culmination of the training they received at the Institute of Hotel Management, Bhubaneswar, which enabled them to create a menu of millet-based snacks. With passion and precision, Kalyani SHG learned to manage ledgers, cash books, and transaction records through specialised training in bookkeeping organised under the Shree Anna Abhiyan. Their annual turnover is now more than Rs 10 lakh.

However, Pushpa's vision extended beyond profit and financial success. Her noble goal was to provide wholesome and nutritious food to children and adults. Through their relentless efforts, the women of Kalyani SHG have not only rewritten their destinies but have also helped build a brighter future for many other women-led SHGs.

Pushpa says, "With determination and support from my community, I began a journey. I led a few women to form an SHG, and together we opened an outlet to serve good food and inspire others. Thanks to Mission Shakti and Shree Anna Abhiyan, I am helping change lives and shape a better future."





Nuapada

10

A Champion of Millet Farming in Nuapada

Gangabai Sour, a progressive farmer from the Chuktia Bhunjia community, one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in Sunabeda village, Komna block, has emerged as a beacon of resilience. Born into a farming family, Gangabai and her husband, Kali Sour, traditionally grew millet and paddy mainly for household consumption. Using the conventional broadcasting method, she could harvest only 2.5 to 3 quintals of finger millet per acre.

Determined to improve productivity, reduce costs, and establish a sustainable millet farming system, Gangabai embraced the System of Millet Intensification (SMI) during a training programme organised under Shree Anna Abhiyan.

Unlike traditional broadcasting, SMI involves transplanting young seedlings at wider spacing. This simple

shift strengthened root growth, improved aeration, reduced competition among plants, and allowed better sunlight exposure. Gangabai also adopted timely weeding and enriched her soil with organic formulations made from cow dung, cow urine, and local plant extracts. These low-cost, chemical-free practices enhanced soil fertility and boosted the plants' resistance to pests and diseases.

The results under SMI were striking. After cultivating 2 acres in her first year and 3 acres in the second, she expanded to 8 acres of ragi in 2024. From this, she harvested 52 quintals of finger millet, storing 2 quintals for household use and seeds while selling the surplus 50 quintals for Rs. 2,25,000 at the Minimum Support Price of Rs. 4,500 per quintal. Her achievement earned her the title of "Best Millet Farmer of Nuapada" during the International Year of Millets celebrations in Bhubaneswar in 2023.

Gangabai's success quickly drew attention. Farmers from Sunabeda and neighbouring villages began visiting her fields to learn about SMI, timely intercultural practices, and organic liquid manure preparation. By sharing her knowledge freely, she has become a catalyst for reviving millet cultivation in her community.

Her journey demonstrates how traditional wisdom, combined with scientific innovation, can transform smallholder farming. Gangabai's resilience and leadership highlight the vital role of women farmers in promoting millets, not just as crops, but as pathways to health, income, and sustainability. As she says, *"When we nurture millets, we are not only feeding our families, we are protecting our land, our health, and the future of our children."*





Sundargarh



11

Jyoti Dang: Reviving Tradition, One Millet at a Time

Jyoti Dang has emerged as a model farmer from Bartoli village in Kuanarmunda block, Sundargarh district. Her story is one of quiet resilience. Once confined within the four walls of her home, she faced a series of personal hardships. The sudden death of her husband left her alone to raise their young son. Struggling with health issues and financial uncertainty, she had little support. Farming was her only source of income, but it was not enough to sustain her family.

"In the beginning, I didn't know how I would manage," Jyoti recalls. "I was grieving, my son needed care, and I had no land of my own. There were days I felt completely lost."

In 2018, Jyoti attended an awareness programme under the Shree Anna Abhiyan, where she learned about millet cultivation, government incentives, and the nutritional value of traditional crops. With no farmland of her own, she rented small plots and began with finger millet.

Over time, her determination and hard work paid off, turning her into one of the leading women millet farmers of Sundargarh. In 2024-25, Jyoti cultivated *mandia* on three acres of land using the System of Millet Intensification (SMI) method, yielding 20 quintals. She set aside 2 quintals for household consumption and sold the remaining 18 quintals at the local mandi, earning Rs.81,000, the highest among women farmers in her area. She sold the ragi at the Minimum Support Price of Rs. 4,500 per quintal.

Earlier, under the traditional broadcasting method, she harvested only around 3 quintals per acre, but after adopting SMI, she now harvests between 5-7 quintals per acre.

“Adopting SMI changed everything for me,” Jyoti shares. “The crop grew better, the yield increased, and I finally felt I could provide for my family. It gave me confidence I had lost after my husband passed away.”

Her success has brought not only financial stability but also recognition. Today, she is seen as a role model for women in her community, inspiring many to take up millet farming.

“Millet farming has shown me the way to live with dignity,” she says. “This golden crop feeds my family, helps me educate my son, and gives me the strength to dream bigger. I want other women to know that even in the face of loss, we can rise.”

With the support of the mandi system and government initiatives, Jyoti plans to expand her millet cultivation. Her journey, from loss and hardship to empowerment and leadership, mirrors the revival of millet itself: resilient, deeply rooted, and full of promise.





Nuapada



12

Seeds of Change: Women Farmers Leading the Way

In the small village of Sethjampani in Komna block of Nuapada district, ten determined women have quietly transformed their lives, and the lives of local farmers, through the Saraswati Self-Help Group (SHG). What began as a simple farming endeavor has blossomed into a remarkable story of empowerment, tradition, and community resilience.

The journey of the Saraswati SHG started when its members attended a training program organized by Shree Anna Abhiyan (SAA). The sessions highlighted the importance of millets, ancient grains that are both climate-resilient and nutrition-rich. “We realized that millets were not just crops; they were a way to secure our future and our children’s health,” recalls Nakura Majhi, president of the group. Inspired, the women took their first bold step: establishing a community-managed seed centre in 2022.

At the seed centre, the women preserve and supply traditional varieties of ragi, Bada Mandia, Dasara Mandia, Lalsaru Mandia, Indrabati Mandia, Arjun Mandia, and Khutni Mandia, as well as three varieties of little millet: Jhati Gurji, Jhapi Gurji, and Kalinga Suan. These seeds, often unavailable elsewhere, are offered at affordable prices to local farmers, helping meet a growing demand while generating income for the SHG. In 2024–25 alone, the group earned Rs. 80,500 from ragi seed sales.

Pramila Majhi, a farmer from nearby Kureswar village, beams with pride as she shares her experience: *“I got traditional ragi and little millet seeds from the centre, which I couldn’t find anywhere else. Now I can grow these nutritious varieties on my farm and pass them on to my children. It feels like I am preserving a piece of our heritage.”*

Another farmer, Sunita Majhi, adds, *“These seeds are a treasure. Earlier, we struggled to find good quality ragi. Now, I feel confident that my farm will produce enough to feed my family and even help my neighbors.”*

The group’s dedication has not gone unnoticed. In 2024, they were honored as the “Best Self-Help Group” during Mandia Dibas celebrations in Bhubaneswar. Their efforts also earned recognition at the International Convention on Millets in 2023 and the International Symposium on Shree Anna and Forgotten Foods in 2024.

Nakura Majhi reflects on their journey with a mix of pride and emotion: *“Running the seed centre has changed our lives. We are self-reliant, we can support our families, and we are educating our children. More than that, we now have a voice in our community. This new identity is priceless.”*

Her fellow member, Subhadra Majhi, smiles and says, *“Every time a farmer comes to buy seeds and thanks us, I feel proud. We are not just growing crops; we are growing hope, knowledge, and respect for women in our village.”*

From humble beginnings as farmers to becoming custodians of traditional seeds, the women of Saraswati SHG are proving that empowerment is not just about income, it’s about dignity, knowledge, and preserving a legacy for generations to come.





Kandhamal



13

Guardian of Vanishing Seeds

Kudeladu Jani, from the Kutia Kondh community, one of Odisha's Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), has spent the past two decades conserving traditional seeds. "They are precious because they need no chemicals, are nutritious, and protect our community's traditional agro-ecological knowledge," she says.

She lives in Burlubaru, a hilltop village in Tumudibandha block, Kandhamal district, where all families belong to the Kutia Kondh community. Rainfed farming sustains the village, with most families growing their own food. Their staple is *mandia jau* (finger millet porridge), eaten at least three to four times a day.

Kudeladu recalls her father's diverse fields: "He used to grow over 50 varieties of 16 different crops, broadcasting seeds before the monsoons. Each crop matured at a different time, and harvesting went on one after another. Earlier we had 5 varieties of finger millet, 6 varieties of little millet, 8 varieties of pulses.

But over the years, we lost many.” She has preserved traditional finger millet varieties such as budha, bhodo, chaulia, and bada.

She explains the challenge posed by hybrid seeds: “They are costly, dependent on chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and eventually make the soil infertile. Traditional seeds need less water, thrive with simple farmyard manure, yield well, and have a longer shelf life.” Reflecting on soil health, Kudeladu adds, “Earlier, our soil was more porous and fertile. Today, it has lost its vitality. Millet farming brings life back to the soil—earthworms return, nutrients multiply, and the land thrives.”

In Kutia Kondh culture, women have traditionally preserved seeds, and inspired by this legacy, Kudeladu mobilized other women to protect their native varieties. Initially, men were skeptical: “Who will pay a good price for these crops?” they asked. Millets were long dismissed as “poor man’s food.” Kudeladu reminded them of the cultural, spiritual, and health value of these grains.

Today, perceptions are shifting. Surplus finger millet now sells at the Minimum Support Price of Rs.4,500 per quintal (in 2024-25), and government support through Shree Anna Abhiyan has made millet farming both remunerative and respected.

Burlubaru has become a hub for traditional seeds, attracting farmers from other villages. Kudeladu and her group freely share seeds through a revived traditional exchange system: those who receive seeds either return double after harvest or exchange another variety. “We have revived this traditional exchange system of our society,” she says proudly.

For Kudeladu, this is more than economics. *“We are restoring the glory of our traditional crops. These seeds are our identity. People call us guardians of vanishing varieties and that makes us proud.”* She adds, *“My father taught me that seeds are living beings, our ancient roots. We must nurture and protect them because they keep our customs alive. That is what I am doing today.”*

Kudeladu also celebrates seed festivals organized by NIRMAN NGO, encouraging women to safeguard traditional seeds and share knowledge. *“These festivals remind us that saving seeds is saving our culture,”* she says. Through her dedication, she has inspired a movement that blends heritage, health, and sustainability, proving that preserving seeds is preserving life itself.





Subarnapur



14

Women's Collective Becomes Social Entrepreneurs

In Telipali village of Kenjhiriapali Gram Panchayat under Birmaharajpur block, Subarnapur district, most families have long depended on paddy cultivation. With agriculture tied closely to the monsoon and limited irrigation facilities, small and marginal farmers struggled to earn enough. Among them were the women of Maa Purnamasi Self Help Group (SHG), formed in 2004 with 10 members led by President Banita Padhan and Secretary Indira Dehury. Alongside household work, these women supported their families in farming, but low yields and limited income kept them on edge.

The launch of the Shree Anna Abhiyan (SAA) in 2023 in Birmaharajpur block marked a turning point. The SHG members saw an opportunity to move away from dependence on paddy. With guidance from the local NGO Global Green, they decided to cultivate ragi collectively on two hectares of land. Encouraged by Banita's leadership, the group worked hard and harvested a good crop.

That same year, applications were invited for setting up bio-input units under SAA. Maa Purnamasi SHG applied and was selected, receiving Rs 30,000 in support. Initially, the women struggled with the technical aspects of preparing bio-manures and pesticides. With help from the district team and technical experts, they were trained in making organic inputs such as Handikhata, Jeevamruta, Nimastra and Agneyastra.

The women began bioinput production in FY 2023-24 with 200 litres of Handikhata, priced at Rs 25 per litre. Sales were slow at first, but with support from Community Resource Persons who promoted the benefits of bio-inputs in millet farming, demand grew steadily.

To expand their reach, the women of Maa Purnamasi SHG began marketing their bio-inputs through direct farmer interactions and local events. They showcased their products at village meetings, farmer field schools, and agricultural fairs organised under the Shree Anna Abhiyan. With support from Community Resource Persons, they demonstrated the effectiveness of Handikhata and Jeevamruta in millet fields, which helped build trust among farmers. Word spread quickly, and their consistent quality turned first-time buyers into regular customers.

Farmers from nearby villages started buying regularly, and the group sold over 2,000 litres of Handikhata and Jeevamruta in FY 24-25. Today, Maa Purnamasi SHG runs the unit with confidence, balancing farming and entrepreneurship. Their success has inspired other women's groups in the block to consider millet farming and allied enterprises as reliable livelihood options.

Beyond earning money, the initiative brought more changes to the community. Farmers began talking more about soil health and sustainable farming, not just crop prices. Many who earlier relied only on chemical fertilisers started trying organic methods after seeing better results. The success of women-led enterprise also changed how the community viewed women's role in business and farming.

The growing popularity and availability of bio-inputs are encouraging farmers in the area to shift from chemical to biological inputs. The initiative by the women collective has helped them become social entrepreneurs and inspired others to follow their path.

"We dreamed, we learned, and we worked hand in hand. In the beginning, it felt like a small step, but today it has changed our lives. Every litre of bio-input we sell is not just income, but also proof of our strength and unity. The Shree Anna Abhiyan gave us courage and knowledge. We are leading from the front and building a better future for our families and community," Banita Padhan says.





Sundargarh



15

From Wage Work to Millet Enterprise

In 2020, ten women from Mahesdihi village in Sadar Block of Sundargarh district came together to form Jyoti Self-Help Group (SHG). Like many rural women's collectives, their early activities revolved around small savings and accessing loans, with some members working as daily wage laborers. Opportunities for stable income were scarce, and their attempts at ventures like mushroom cultivation yielded little success. Without collective investment, the group initially struggled to find direction. The women aspired to start a business together but faced multiple obstacles. Their plan to cultivate millets could not move forward due to lack of land, leaving members discouraged and stressed.

Change arrived in July 2020, when the Mission Shakti Department and the Shree Anna Abhiyan invited Expressions of Interest for setting up ragi cleaning units. Jyoti SHG seized the opportunity. With Mission Shakti's facilitation, they secured a loan from a nationalized bank and built the required infrastructure.

Shree Anna Abhiyan provided a modern three-deck ragi cleaner-cum-grader, boosting efficiency and scale. Today, Jyoti SHG supplies cleaned ragi to 37 Take-Home Ration (THR) units across all 17 blocks of Sundargarh. They supply ragi laddoo to both ICDS and SC and ST (SSD) Department's nutrition programs, processing over 350 quintals of ragi every month. From supplying just 150 quintals of ragi per month in 2020 for ICDS programs, the group's reach expanded in 2024 when they began supporting SSD programs as well. Their monthly business turnover now stands at around 1.5 lakh. The women have become financially independent, earned respect in their community.

The SHG's journey reflects more than just business growth, it highlights how grassroots women's collectives can strengthen local nutrition programs while empowering themselves economically and socially. *"Our journey proves that when women work together with courage and persistence, they can turn small beginnings into sustainable enterprises that nourish both families and communities,"* said Emanti Guria, President, Jyoti SHG.





Keonjhar

16

Keonjhar Women Turn Millet into Enterprise

In the quiet village of Barkhandia in Jhumpura block of Keonjhar district, a remarkable story of women's determination is unfolding. Just a decade ago, most women here spent their days juggling between wage labour and small household activities like making badi and papad to earn a few extra rupees. Life was uncertain, wages were low, payments were often delayed, and work was seasonal. Without storage or processing facilities, their harvests fetched little in the market, and their contributions to agriculture went largely unnoticed.

But things began to change in 2016, when a group of women decided to come together and form Dasery Producer Company Limited (DPCL), a women-led Farmers Producer Organisation. Starting with 402 women and 98 men, DPCL was born out of a shared dream: to take control of their livelihoods and bring dignity to their labour.

Support soon followed from the District Mineral Foundation (DMF), Keonjhar, and Shree Anna Abhiyan, which became pivotal in transforming that dream into reality. The women underwent hands-on training through the Agriculture Department and went on exposure visits to successful processing units. With new skills and machinery support, like a grader-cum-destoner, they began to see farming not as survival, but as enterprise.

“Earlier, we worked hard but earned little. Today, we process and sell what we grow. We are no longer just farmers, we are businesswomen,” says one of the members proudly.

DPCL’s activities soon expanded—from collective millet farming to seed banking, bio-input preparation, processing, and marketing. Today, their unit hums with the sounds of grading, destoning, hulling, grinding, and packaging of millet-based products. The result has been remarkable: productivity of ragi has improved, and members’ incomes have risen significantly. Their products are now sold both within and beyond Odisha. Since 2021-22, DPCL has been recognized as an official procurement agency, supplying ragi through the Tribal Development Co-operative Corporation of Odisha Limited (TDCCOL).

In the year 2024-25 alone, the women supplied 184.81 quintals of ragi grains to Anganwadi centres, earning over Rs. 1 lakh, and 19.1 quintals of ragi flour to crèche centres run by Niyatee Foundation and Ekjut Foundation, bringing in another Rs. 1.33 lakh. The following year, they expanded further, delivering 15 quintals of ragi flour to 35 schools in Jhumpura block, generating an annual income of Rs. 1.05 lakh.

Recognition soon followed. DPCL was awarded the “Best Millet Cleaning Unit” at the district-level Mela, a proud moment that symbolized how far they had come. Most importantly, every woman member now takes part in decision-making, a milestone in the journey toward gender equality in agriculture.

The impact goes beyond income. By pooling resources and working collectively, DPCL’s members have strengthened their food security, improved household nutrition, and inspired other women-led groups across Keonjhar.

As they look ahead, the women are already planning to expand their enterprise with new value addition facilities and a millet-based bakery unit. Their journey, from subsistence farming to entrepreneurship, is a testament to what women can achieve when given the tools, trust, and opportunity to lead.





Mayurbhanj



17

Millet Farming Makes Women Self-Reliant

When the first monsoon showers hit Bankati village in Bijatala block of Odisha's Mayurbhanj district, 32-year-old Subhadra Dhal walks barefoot through her millet field, her eyes scanning the lush green crop. "These tiny grains changed my life," she says, her voice steady but full of pride. "I grew up seeing my father grow millets. He always told me they survive even when other crops fail. I wanted to bring them back to our plates and our lives."

For years, Subhadra lived the life of an ordinary village woman — managing her household, raising her children, and occasionally helping her husband on their small plot of land. But things began to change in 2022, when the Shree Anna Abhiyan was launched in her block. The local NGO DULAL organized campaigns, food festivals, and training sessions on millet cultivation. "Those meetings opened my eyes," Subhadra recalls. "I learned that millets are not only part of our tradition but also good for our health and the soil."

Encouraged by what she learned, Subhadra motivated members of her Maa Santoshi Self-Help Group (SHG) to take up millet farming. Together, they adopted the System of Millet Intensification (SMI) method, a scientific technique that improves yield through wider spacing and better management. Subhadra decided to cultivate finger millet on three acres of land.

Her hard work paid off. In 2024, she harvested 18 quintals of finger millet, a yield far better than expected. “I couldn’t believe it at first,” she laughs. “We kept two quintals for our family and sold the rest at Rs. 4,500 per quintal. I earned Rs. 72,000, plus a farmer incentive of Rs. 10,000. For the first time, I felt confident that farming could truly support our family.”

That success became a turning point not just for Subhadra, but for her entire village. Farmers began following her lead, cultivating millets on both fertile and fallow lands. “People saw that millets need less water, less fertilizer, and still give good income,” she says. “Now many women are trying it too.”

Subhadra didn’t stop at farming. With a dream to take millets from the fields to people’s plates, she applied to start a Millet Shakti Tiffin Centre and her SHG was selected. “We were so excited,” she smiles. “We wanted everyone to taste how delicious and healthy millet food can be.”

Soon, Subhadra and her group began preparing millet-based recipes like Khaja, Khajuri Goja, Baleswari, Nimki, Arisha Pitha, Millet Laddu, and Millet Powder. Their laddus became especially popular, leading to orders from local schools and nearby districts. “Our Millet Laddus are now served in school meals,” she says proudly. “Children love them and that makes us happiest.”

Her culinary talent has earned her widespread recognition. She won first prize at the Block-level Recipe Competition and second place at the district level in 2024. “I never thought I would stand on a stage and receive a prize for cooking millet!” she laughs. “It gave me courage to dream bigger.”

Today, the Millet Shakti Tiffin Centre earns between Rs. 1,500 and Rs. 2,000 a day, adding up to about Rs. 5–6 lakh annually. The business has become a sustainable source of income for Subhadra and other SHG members. “We started small, but now we get regular parcel orders,” she says. “It’s not just about money, it’s about respect and independence.”

With her increased income, Subhadra has invested in her children’s education and household improvements. “Earlier, we worried about school fees,” she says. “Now, I can say proudly that my farming pays for my children’s future.”





Sundargarh



18

WSHG's Millet-Driven Journey Towards Empowerment

In Kiakachhar village in Tangarpali block of Sundargarh district, a group of 15 women came together in 2017 to form the Dhanalaxmi Self-Help Group (SHG). Like many rural women's collectives, they began with small savings and modest farming - mainly rice and vegetables. Though their efforts brought in some income, it was hardly enough to support their families. Loans from the SHG often went to meet urgent household needs, while the women silently longed for a chance to prove their capabilities. Recognition for their work and voices in decision-making were limited, leaving them searching for an opportunity to grow.

That opportunity came in 2018-19, when the group first experimented with millet cultivation under the Shree Anna Abhiyan. The programme opened new doors, and in 2020, they received a thresher machine along with training. For the women, this was more than just a tool, it reduced drudgery, improved processing, and gave them a glimpse of running their own enterprise. Their turning point arrived in 2023,

when Dhanalaxmi SHG received Rs 50,000 to establish a Millet Shakti Tiffin Centre. Determined to expand, they also pooled their own funds to buy bakery equipment. Soon, they introduced innovative millet-based cakes, biscuits, breads, and snacks, blending traditional foods with modern tastes.

Their journey since then has been remarkable. The tiffin centre quickly became popular, offering nearly 25 millet-based recipes, from traditional pitha, dosa, and biryani to millet vermicelli and mixtures. From earning a few thousand rupees earlier, the SHG now achieves an annual turnover of Rs 8-10 lakh, with a monthly profit of about Rs 30,000. This financial stability has improved their children's education, enhanced household conditions, and earned them respect in their families and community. Their achievements have been showcased at national platforms, including the India International Trade Fair in Delhi, and honoured with multiple awards.

Beyond profits, Dhanalaxmi SHG has become a mentor for other women's groups, training them in millet recipes and supporting farmers through local FPOs. Its success has set off a powerful ripple effect across neighbouring villages. Inspired by their achievements, several other women's groups have started millet-based enterprises, from small food stalls to home-based baking units. Farmers who once grew only paddy are now diversifying their fields with millets, encouraged by the steady demand created by SHGs like Dhanalaxmi. Local youth are also taking interest in entrepreneurship and food processing, seeing it as a sustainable livelihood option. This collective movement has not only boosted incomes but also revived traditional food habits, strengthened local economies, and enhanced community pride.

"Our small dreams grew big with Mission Shakti and Shree Anna Abhiyan. Today, I feel proud not just for the income, but for the strength we have gained," says Rajlaxmi Das, President, Dhanalaxmi SHG.





Bargarh



19

Padampur's Millet Revolution: Women at the Helm

In the heart of Padampur town in Odisha's Bargarh district, a quiet revolution is taking place, one millet meal at a time. At a modest corner near the town center, the aroma of freshly cooked *chakuli*, *mandia bara*, and millet momos wafts through the air, drawing regulars and curious newcomers alike. This is the Millets Shakti Tiffin Centre, a small food outlet run by 10 determined women of the Maa Durga Self Help Group (SHG), a collective that has turned traditional grains into a recipe for empowerment.

Formed on August 7, 2018, the group began with a simple vision: to empower women and strengthen local livelihoods through self-reliance. "We wanted to do something meaningful, something that would give us income and also benefit others," recalls Anupama Padhan, the SHG's president and manager.

With guidance and training from Shree Anna Abhiyan and Mission Shakti, their dream began to take shape. The SHG members underwent hands-on training in bookkeeping, record-keeping, and millet-based food

preparation—skills that would soon transform their lives. On January 19, 2023, the Millets Shakti Tiffin Centre was inaugurated by the local MLA and the Sub-Collector of Padampur, marking a proud milestone for the women.

“When we started, we barely knew how to run a business,” Anupama admits with a smile. “But today, we handle everything ourselves, from cooking to accounts. Seeing people enjoy our millet dishes gives us immense satisfaction.”

From 6 AM to 11 AM and again from 3 PM to 9 PM, the centre hums with activity. Customers line up for breakfast specials like millet *idli*, *upma*, *mandia bara*, *kakara pitha*, and *arisa pitha*, each dish blending tradition with nutrition. Evenings bring a fusion twist: millet manchurian, momos, *pakudi*, *chaat*, and the crowd favorite *mandia* tea.

Behind the counter, the women work in perfect coordination. Some handle the griddle, others serve customers or maintain accounts. *“We’ve all found our strengths,”* says member Sumitra Naik. *“Earlier, I never imagined I would be interacting with so many people every day. Now, customers ask for me by name!”*

The results speak for themselves. In just over a year, their daily sales have doubled, from Rs.2,500 to Rs. 5,000. The SHG now earns an average monthly income of Rs.45,000 to Rs.50,000, which the women manage with careful bookkeeping and shared decision-making.

More than the numbers, though, it’s the pride and purpose that shine through. *“Our centre has made us independent,”* says member Rina Bhoi. *“We contribute to our families, and our children see us as role models. That feels incredible.”*

The initiative has also revived interest in traditional grains. *“Millets were once disappearing from our kitchens,”* Anupama reflects. *“Now, people come asking for them. Through our food, we are reminding everyone that millets are healthy, affordable, and part of our culture.”*

Looking ahead, the group dreams big. In the next three years, Maa Durga SHG plans to expand their venture into a Millet Shakti Café, offering an even wider range of nutritious foods. *“We have learned that with teamwork and the right support, women can do anything,”* Anupama says with quiet determination.

From homemakers to entrepreneurs, the women of Maa Durga SHG have not only found a livelihood, they have become torchbearers of a movement that connects tradition, nutrition, and empowerment in every serving.





Keonjhar



20

Krishna SHG is Redefining Women's Empowerment

In Jamuhota village of Kendujhar district, ten determined women came together in 2009 to form the Krishna Self-Help Group (SHG). Each contributed just Rs. 25, an amount small in value but rich in hope. With their pooled Rs. 250, they began making traditional snacks like neemki and laddu. "Our first sale brought us a profit of Rs. 700," recalls Ganga Singh, the group's president, with a smile. "It may sound small, but for us, it was a big beginning, a sign that our efforts could truly change our lives."

Encouraged by this early success, the women expanded their ventures into badi, achar, and papad, slowly building confidence and honing their entrepreneurial skills. Then, in 2011, came a turning point: the group was allotted a Chhatua unit under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) project. They took a loan of Rs. 1 lakh, an intimidating leap for first-time entrepreneurs.

“We had no machines and barely knew how to maintain records,” says Ganga. “But we learned together, by doing, by failing, and by not giving up.” Their persistence paid off. By December 2022, the Krishna SHG was supported by the Shree Anna Abhiyan to set up a Millet Shakti Café in Kendujhar. To prepare for this new venture, the women underwent hands-on training at the Institute of Hotel Management, Bhubaneswar, mastering millet-based recipes, café operations, and bookkeeping.

Showcasing their products at national platforms like the Millets for Millions Convention and District Mineral Foundation events in Delhi gave them a stage they had never imagined. “Standing in Delhi and offering our millet products to Members of Parliament was a proud moment,” says Ganga. “It made us realize how far we had come from our small village kitchen.”

Back home, the Millet Shakti Café, located inside the Kendujhar Collectorate Campus, has become a bustling hub of healthy and homely food. Every day, it serves 200–250 customers, offering everything from millet *chakuli*, *idli*, and *bara* to *pakodi*, *pithas*, momos, and even millet chowmein. Their innovative millet momos have become a crowd favorite at local events and fairs.

In 2025, the group’s dedication was recognized when their café won the Best Stall Award at the Herbal Mela, presented by Hon’ble Chief Minister Shri Mohan Charan Majhi.

To spread awareness, the SHG also distributes leaflets and posters highlighting the health benefits of millet-based foods. They’ve built trust within their community and beyond through word-of-mouth, exhibitions, and collaborations with schools and cafés.

Today, the café earns a monthly turnover of nearly Rs. 2 lakh, ensuring each member takes home about Rs.10,000. For these women, it’s not just income, it’s empowerment. “The café has given us our own identity,” says Ganga. “People now recognize us not just as homemakers but as entrepreneurs. That respect is our real profit.” Fellow member Yashoda Tanty adds, “Because of this café, I can educate my children without worry. Earlier, it felt impossible. Now I proudly support my family with dignity.”

Looking ahead, the group plans to establish a bakery unit, expand their millet processing facility with a larger godown and modern machinery, and upgrade the café to provide an even better experience. They also aim to enhance the packaging and labeling of their products, so that Krishna SHG’s millet-based foods can reach customers beyond Odisha.





Kalahandi



21

Organic Farming Trailblazers of Kalahandi

In the remote villages of Kalahandi district, a quiet agricultural revolution is underway, led by women determined to restore the health of their soils and crops. One shining example is the Prabhudh Bharat Self-Help Group (SHG) from Goindamunda village in Karlamunda block.

Formed in 2004 with just 10 women engaged in goat rearing and vegetable farming, the group's journey took a transformative turn in 2022. Participating in training organized by Shree Anna Abhiyan and Mission Shakti, the women learned millet cultivation techniques and the production of organic bioinputs, natural solutions that enrich soil, boost yields, and protect crops from pests.

Today, the SHG produces 400-500 bottles of bioinputs every month, including Bijaamrut, Jeevaamrut, Nimaastra, Handikata, and Jiyakhata, priced at Rs. 20 each. This initiative generates around Rs. 1 lakh annually and directly benefits farmers from Goindamunda and eight surrounding villages.

Local farmer Ram Bagh shares his experience: *"I have been using bioinputs from the Prabhudh Bharat SHG since 2022 on my ragi, kodo, and foxtail millet crops. Treating seeds with Bijaamrut and spraying Nimastra on the leaves has strengthened my plants, improved yields, and reduced pest damage. Earlier, I relied on chemical fertilizers that were expensive and hard to get. Now, everything I need is produced locally, naturally, and sustainably."*

The women SHG members also focus on raising awareness about the benefits of organic farming. They conduct sensitization camps, distribute pamphlets in local markets, and paint messages on village walls to promote the environmental and economic advantages of bioinputs. *"Farmers are realizing that healthy soil produces healthy crops,"* says Bhanumati Pradhan, a group member. *"Our motto is to free our fields from chemicals and make agriculture sustainable."*

Alongside producing bioinputs, the SHG cultivates ragi, kodo, and little millet, selling their produce in local markets and showcasing millet-based foods at festivals in Bhawanipatna and Karlamunda. These activities not only boost income but also revive traditional foods and farming practices. Another farmer, Sita Nayak, adds, *"Since switching to bioinputs, I have noticed the soil turning darker and more fertile. Earthworms are back, and my crops are healthier than ever. The yields have increased, and pests no longer devastate my fields. The Prabhudh SHG women have truly changed farming in our village."*

The Prabhudh Bharat SHG is a testament to how women's collective action, knowledge of organic practices, and entrepreneurial spirit can restore soil health, improve productivity, and foster sustainable livelihoods in rural Odisha.





Malkangiri



22

Custom Hiring Centres: Reducing Farmers' Drudgery

Malkangiri district in southern Odisha, known for its vast forests and tribal communities, has long struggled with low agricultural productivity. Most farmers here depended on traditional tools and labour-intensive methods that consumed time, increased costs, and reduced yields. Limited access to modern farm equipment left them vulnerable. Mathili is one such remote block where millet cultivation is a vital source of food and income.

Change began in 2017-18 when the Shree Anna Abhiyan introduced a Custom Hiring Centre (CHC) in Ramaguda village through the Saveri Setu Farmers Producer Company. The idea was simple but transformative. It provided farmers with access to modern agricultural equipment on rent, payable after harvest. Over time, three more sub-centres were set up in Salimi, Dhungiaput, and Pangam, linking with self-help groups and ensuring that farmers across the block could benefit.

The CHC stocked a range of tools that eased farm work. It included 155 cycle weeders, 27 sprayers, 4 pump sets, 10 markers, 14 sieving devices, and 6 winnowing fans. These machines made tasks such as weeding, spraying, threshing, and sieving faster and easier, cutting down on labour and costs. Women farmers who once relied on slow, traditional methods could now cultivate more land in less time, with less effort. By reducing drudgery and expenses, the CHC made millet farming more attractive and viable.

The impact has been significant. Between 2021 and 2024, more than 6,900 farmers accessed equipment from the four centres. In 2022–23 alone, over 2,000 farmers benefitted, with user fees pooled back into maintaining and improving the centres. The income generated is reinvested into equipment upkeep and the development of the farmer producer company, creating a sustainable model that continues to serve the community.

Sabita Jani, a woman farmer says, *“With the support of the Custom Hiring Centre, farming is no longer a struggle. We save time, reduce costs, and harvest more. Today, we see hope for our families and for millet farming in our village. Earlier, we used to spend five to six hours every day removing weeds from the farm. Now, with the help of cycle weeders hired from the CHC, the work takes only about three hours.”*





Nuapada



23

From Migrant Worker to a Successful Millet Farmer

Shashidhar Podh once relied entirely on brick kilns in Andhra Pradesh to support his family. Lack of local opportunities forced him to migrate, leaving his family and land behind. But over time, he has returned to his native village and embraced millet farming, creating a new identity as a successful millet farmer.

Shashidhar lives with his family in Darlipada village in Sinapalli block in Nuapada district. Financial struggles made even two meals a day difficult. The education and future of his children were a constant concern. Despite his desire to educate them, money was always a barrier. Eventually, he mortgaged his land to arrange his daughters' marriage and migrated to Andhra Pradesh to work as a brick kiln laborer. His daily routine was grueling: making bricks, eating one meal a day, and sleeping on raw bricks. Years away from home, he faced countless hardships but persevered for the sake of his family.

In 2021, during the Kharif season, Shashidhar returned home and attended a training program on millet farming organized under the state government's Shri Anna Abhiyan. Inspired, he began experimenting with finger millet cultivation. Seeing promising results, he decided to adopt *mandia* farming as a full-time livelihood, leaving migration behind.

Last year, he cultivated finger millet on three acres using the System of Millet Intensification (SMI) method and harvested 21 quintals. He stored 2 quintals for household consumption. He sold surplus 19 quintals in the local mandi for Rs. 85,500. With this income, he freed his mortgaged land. Government incentives further encouraged him to continue millet farming. Today, Shashidhar has transformed from a migrant laborer into a successful millet farmer and fulfilled his dream of providing higher education for his children. His journey has inspired about 30 farmers in the area to give up migration and embrace millet farming.

Reflecting on his journey, Shashidhar says, *"Working as a migrant laborer was extremely difficult, being away from my family for years and earning so little. But now, the government is taking steps to improve farmers' livelihoods. With the support of Shri Anna Abhiyan, farmers are receiving fair prices and benefits. Today, youth, elders, and women who had abandoned millet farming are returning to it."*

Shashidhar's wife, Pramila, adds, *"The dream of educating our children has finally come true. When my husband went to Andhra Pradesh, managing household expenses was very difficult. But now, with millet farming, our situation has improved. Together, we are planning to cultivate even more millet."*





Koraput



24

From Koraput to Delhi: A Journey of Inspiration

Sukhdev Silpadia is a progressive farmer from Paligud village in Boipariguda block of Koraput district.. By cultivating several varieties of millets through improved agronomic practices, he has carved out a new identity for himself and set an example for other farmers. Despite facing poverty and hardships, Sukhdev's determination and innovation have taken him from his small village fields to national recognition in Delhi. His journey of change began in 2018 when he joined the Shree Anna Abhiyan's (SAA) nutritional awareness program, where he learned about improved agronomic practices to boost yields of ragi, little millet, and kodo.

For years, he grew millets mainly for household consumption, with little income and no market support. "Earlier, there was neither a market system nor financial incentives for millet farmers," Sukhdev recalls. But

after the training, he adopted organic fertilizers, scientific seed sowing, and proper crop management practices. Last year, under the system of millet intensification method, he harvested 22 quintals of ragi, out of which he preserved 2 quintals for household consumption. He sold the surplus 20 quintals at the Minimum Support Price (Rs. 4,500 per quintal), earning Rs. 90,000.

Starting with just half an acre, he successfully cultivated 21 traditional varieties of ragi, including Mami, Bati, Kala Kerenga, Richka, Kadali, Dumuri, Chilika, Dasara, Bada Mandia, Sana Mandia, Gurungu, Kerenga, and Janha. Some of these varieties were purchased from the Sabujima FPO in Boipariguda, which also provided him a cycle weeder on a rental basis. His improved farming methods not only boosted yields but also inspired neighboring farmers to adopt millet cultivation. As more farmers followed his lead, the demand for millets in the village steadily increased.

By selling his produce at the state-supported local mandis, Sukhdev was able to secure fair prices and financial stability. His success story soon spread beyond Koraput, earning him recognition at the national level. In 2023, he was honored as a “Successful Millet Farmer” at the Millets for Millions event held in New Delhi.

Sukhdev says, *“Millet farming has enhanced my income. I have been praised not only in Odisha but also in Delhi, Kolkata, and Mumbai. This has been possible only because of SAA.”* Sukhdev’s story stands as a testament to how knowledge, training, and resilience can transform farmers’ lives. His success continues to motivate others in his community to embrace millet farming, ensuring both better livelihoods and a healthier food system.





Rayagada

25

A Farmer's Leap to Success with Millets

Kandagari Naidu, a 61-year-old farmer from Revolkana village in Rayagada district, has spent more than four decades working on his 3 acres of land. Living in a joint family of 16 members, he relied mostly on ragi and paddy to support his household. However, Naidu struggled with low yields and rising costs. He used traditional farming methods like broadcasting seeds. He could not weed his fields regularly because he did not have enough help. Because of this, he got very low yields, only about 3 quintals per acre. This small harvest created big troubles for his family. The money he earned from selling his crops was not enough to feed 16 people properly. He had no savings left at the end of the season. When he needed money urgently, he had to borrow from local moneylenders who charged very high interest rates. This pushed him into more and more debt every year. His family had to cut back on everything. They could not afford nutritious food regularly. When someone fell sick, they often delayed going to the doctor because they had no money. His

sons saw no hope in farming and had to leave the village to work as daily wage laborers in nearby towns. This broke up the family and made Naidu very sad. Even though he worked hard on his land for over 40 years, he felt stuck. No matter how much he tried, his family kept struggling. He felt helpless and worried about his family's future.

His life began to change with the support of the Shree Anna Abhiyan. Field staff from AKSSUS, a facilitating agency, trained Naidu on the System of Millet Intensification (SMI), an improved agronomic practice for better productivity and higher yield. Through exposure visits, demonstrations, and constant guidance, he learnt various techniques such as nursery raising, bio-fertiliser use, wider spacing, and regular weeding with simple tools. Initially hesitant, Naidu decided to try SMI on two acres during the 2024-25 Kharif season.





The results were very good. His yield jumped from around three quintals to seven quintals per acre. He harvested 21 quintals of ragi from three acres, out of which he stored four quintals for household consumption, ensuring year-round food security. He sold the surplus 17 quintals at local mandi, earning Rs.76,500, at the rate of Rs.4500 per quintal.

The extra income helped him repair his house roof, buy a small tiller, and invest in his grandchildren's schooling. With better financial stability, the family could also afford healthcare and nutritious food. Naidu's success reduced the need for his sons to migrate for work, as opportunities improved on their own farm. Today, he has become a trainer for other farmers in his village, guiding them on SMI practices.

"Now we have enough ragi to eat throughout the year and some to sell. My family lives with more dignity, and other farmers come to me for advice. I feel proud that I could bring this change," says Naidu with a smile.



Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment, Government of Odisha

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