

## **SANITARY NAPKIN PRODUCTION UNIT AT KAMALABARI**

### **An Initiative by the Women Kaveri Sangha**

Members Kamlabari-II Kaveri Sangha, a Cluster of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) of Kamlabari-II Gram Panchayat under Raiganj Development Block of Uttar Dinajpur District, West Bengal used to feel it necessary that 'Health' is a vital component of Economic Development of a society. Meanwhile, the Panchayat and Rural Development Department of Government of West Bengal decided to implement "Menstrual Hygiene Management Programme (MHM)" in the District of Uttar Dinajpur in collaboration with the UNICEF. The District Rural Development Cell (DRDC), Uttar Dinajpur by the time, had extended its helping hands by providing an infrastructural support to setup a low-cost Sanitary Napkin Factory. And thence the story begins.

Kamlabari-II Kaveri Sangha, an SHG Cluster with its membership to 115 SHGs, consisting with nearly 1300 SHG members covering almost all house-holds lying 'Below Poverty Line' of the Gram Panchayat having its own line of thinking, setup the 'Sanitary Napkin Factory' at their Cluster Building with a capacity to produce 500 packets of standard size per day. It was the end February, 2013. They had started with merely Rs. 1,60,000/- towards the support from the Government for purchasing machineries and the working capital they managed by accruing a share capital from their own. The District Rural Development Cell had arranged two different exposure visits for the aspiring workforce at the existing units of different West Bengal districts in the recent past.

For the whole work-team consisting with 30 members, they have been divided into 4 convenient groups viz-a-viz, Team for Awareness Building, Team for Production, Team for Quality Management and Maintenance of Accounts, and Team for Procurement and Marketing.

Awareness building takes the pivot role in implementing the MHM Programme. Kamlabari-II Kaveri Sangha has been organizing this awareness building programme in different schools, Gram Sava Meetings, Gram Panchayat Meetings, SHG Training Programmes so on since it decides to work out with the MHM Programme. With limited knowledge jargon, the Team for Awareness Building has already organized nearly 90 programmes throughout the district so far. The result is very much positive too. Different girls' schools have already tied-up with Kamlabari-II Kaveri Sangha for procuring 'Diya' brand Sanitary Napkin. Different Girls' Hostels meant for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students under Government Welfare Programmes have also tied up with Kamlabari-II Kaveri Sangha for procuring Sanitary Napkins.

The 'Team for Production' is although not highly educationally qualified but their inner urge makes them too competent in production arena so as producing high quality 'Diya' brand Sanitary Napkin, which is competing in the local market with available products.

Without involving much advertisement and with almost zero 'Selling Cost', 'Diya' is now available not only at the SHG level but finds its way into the 'Middle-Class' School Goers' and College Goers' bags. This has become possible because of a tight 'Quality Checking' by the Team of Quality Management. 'Diya' Brand, even unlike the available market varieties, is sanitized by 'Ultra-Violate Rays'. The brand is now finding its own way of marketing through Govt. projects, NGO linked schemes and even in some local medicine stores. These poor 70 odd members are dreaming for self reliancy of all the SHG members of Kamalabri-II Kaveri Sangha through the brand "Diya".