

Case study — Ibtada

Krishna Kaur of Nadka village, tucked away in the heart of Ramgarh block of Alwar district, Rajasthan, has been working as an Anganwadi worker since 2003. She formed two Self Help Groups (SHG), namely, *Chirag Samuh* (2005) and *Deepak Samuh* (2006), as part of the larger efforts of the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD), Government of Rajasthan (GoR).

Chirag Samuh commenced operations with 10 members each pooling Rs20 as monthly saving. In a mere five months, Krishna was constrained to adopt a door-to-door collection of these savings, as the majority of the members were loath to come to the meetings. Very soon, the group stopped meeting altogether.

A few members even stopped depositing their monthly contributions, failing to see any real benefit. Some members who availed of loans from the group failed to pay them back, thanks to the lack of any peer pressure mechanism. This eventually led to the group winding up. Krishna's efforts with *Deepak Samuh* too met with a similar fate.



In 2007, Ibtada, Alwar, supported by the Trust under the **Sakh Se Vikas - Rajasthan Microfinance Initiative**, initiated a pilot programme to strengthen the **DWCD** groups, in partnership with the Department. This involved training and skill enhancement of Anganwadi workers, such as Krishna. It was complemented by regular handholding support for all group activities.

A rejuvenated and better-equipped Krishna formed a new group - *Maa Durga Swayam Sahayta Samuh*. Timely meetings, full attendance, sitting in a circle during meetings, depositing savings during the meeting only, an increase in the monthly saving amount to Rs100, almost 100 per cent use of group funds in inter-lending, demand-based lending, timely repayment, imposition of fines for delay in repayment, were a few characteristics of Krishna's new SHG.

"Earlier, I had no knowledge of writing records or keeping books of accounts and hence, perhaps, the improper maintenance of records kept the group away from the banking facility. Today, I can even prepare the monthly trial balance, besides filling the MIS format of Groups," reflects a beaming Krishna. The interest of the group is reflected in their paying Rs50 each month as service fees to a facilitator thus ensuring proper record maintenance.

The success of groups such as Krishna's, stems from a collaboration between **DWCD**, the **Centre for microFinance (CmF)**, Jaipur, and two of the Trust's partners in Rajasthan - Jan **Shiksha Evam Vikas Sangathan (PEDO)** and Ibtada, made possible through the Trust's support.

The two-year pilot project recognises the increased role of government departments in the promotion of SHGs, and the need to strengthen their perspective and programmes. The project reaches out to 500 old and 200 new SHGs, comprising 9,000 women



members across two blocks in two districts of the state. This project aims to develop a model of strengthening existing SHGs, which could be scaled up in other parts of the state.

This is also the result of a long-term investment in the field programmes and capacities of its partner organisations that are now emerging as resource agencies in the state.