

**A report  
on  
Food security for destitute single women and children**

Preface – “The food security for destitute single women and children” was a project initiated by Shramajivi Mahila Samity supported by Niwano Peace Foundation, Japan. SMS focused on the issues of food security of destitute single women and their children as it had a good grip over the food security issues earlier as well. Its knowledge about the tribal life, the communities, and its experience while working with the tribal communities gave the glimpse of the need for food security. It was observed that the basic problem was lack food, insecurity of livelihood, poverty and deprivation, hunger and its check. The fundamental idea was picked from here and on this pretext the theme of the project was taken.

Food security for destitute single women & their children was taken up in the year 2010 in from blocks of chaibasa, chakardharpur, Manoharpur and Sonua of the west singhbhum district in Jharkhand. The Socio- economic status of these blocks was very poor; the communities were majorly tribal, with no source of income most of the year. A baseline survey conducted on 4216 single women before the initiation of the project reflected that a meager 40% of the single women had adequate food for the whole year. About 60% could only ensure food for a quarter periods, while 24% had 5-10 months of food security and 12% had no source of income is a stark reality.

During the course of the project use of intervention tools like entitlements to various govt schemes, formation & strengthening of the various SHGs & CIGs, credit linkage, use of land for modern technology like SRI, Vegetable farming, job schemes under MNREGA etc., paved a long way of food security in these areas and also sustainability to a considerable extent.

At the end of project can be attributed the fact that 4216 single women joined as members of the Ekal Nari Sashakti Sangathan and they have been linked as a network from the village level to the hamlet level. About 100 CIGs formation & their linkage reflects that 1500 women have been under process of employment, 1440 single women have attained leadership. These figures of economic betterment suggest that the project has considerably tried to address the food security issues of single destitute women & their children to a considerable extent.

## Background –

The autonomous women's movement in India, which emerged in the early seventies, started as an urban movement of young women. Anger over alleged suicides of newly married women, which were in fact, murders, mobilized women across the country to demand change in legislation to address violence against women in its many forms. The campaign in the early 80's around the "Mathura Rape Case" (a young adivasi woman raped in Police Custody) led to changes in law, which enacted strict punishment for custodial rape. Since then, the women's movement spread to rural areas and in varying forms, - gender sensitization, gender mainstreaming in development programmes, organizing women for livelihoods, etc., has reached out to marginalized women to support them in their struggles for economic rights and dignity. One of the vulnerable sections reached out to is single/widowed women.

It is estimated that 8% of all women in India are widows. Due to the stigma attached to divorced, separated and single women, we know their numbers are invisible to a great extent. Their myriad problems are ignored and women suffer in silence.

Ever since the establishment and inception of the Shramajivi Mahila Samity it has catered to the causes of women, their all round development with emphases on this organization building. As a Civil Society organization SMS has always endeavored to lead as the pioneer organization in the women welfare aspects. It feels that organization building for the women boosts up their confidence and strengthens them as a unit to exercise their right to dignity, right to self –esteem, right to access their food right, fundamental and constitutional rights. While functional the aforesaid issues of women its focus also shifted towards single women.

Single women have manifold issues but specifically the SMS took up was organization building and advocacy on leadership building. Association building and uniting the single women to different forums has been the USP of SMS right the from block level to the district level. It is an ongoing objective though the strength of the association of single women has gone up to 4216. It has been instrumental in concentrating towards their empowerment and leadership building so that they can strive to survive in the most ordeal economic constraints as a team. Economic assistance available at its behest was not sufficient enough and unsustainable. Thus right based approach and empowerment attain food security for single destitute women and their children were taken up in the year 2010 under the support and guidance of Niwano Peace Foundation, Japan.

The project was taken up in West Singhbhum District of Jharkhand state as it is the second largest tribal inhabited district besides it is the most hunger- prone district. SMS had engaged itself in the said district prior to this project, hence had an insight on the line of extreme poverty in the area. Extreme poverty to the point of destitution made it more

vulnerable towards food security need. 10% of the households in the district are on the verge of destitution. 70% of the population fall in the below poverty line category that depend on forest, agriculture and daily wage labor for their livelihood. Single women and their children were the target groups as these women are the most vulnerable group being landless, destitution to the maximum and high degree of poverty. Their children are hunger prone, become child labor and suffer exploitation. The Govt. also does not enable them to own ration cards, entitlement over resources and assets and are considered aliens in their own villages.

This being the overview of the target group and the background of the project area food security project was enunciated to improvise upon the socio economic status of the single destitute women and their children. Sample baseline Survey on 4216 single women in the four blocks of Chaibasa, Chakradharpur, Manoharpur and Sonua was conducted which reflected that the single women faced acute food crises, 30% of them were registered job cards holders Under MNREGA but were most vulnerable wherein only 27% had access to BPL cards, hence dependency on these women for food security was maximum. These key findings enabled a direction to the project through land utilization of the accessed land, livelihood security through assets, collective farming, adoption of modern agricultural techniques and SRI methodologies. These concrete steps of food security have definitely taken a step ahead towards sustainability and long term economic betterment but the 3 years span of time was a little less for a magnanimous goal of food security for single women and their children to be achieved.

Nevertheless our endeavor to continue with the objective shall not perish even though the project scope shows the time barrier.

**Scenario of project area** - West Singhbhum district came into existence when the old Singhbhum District bifurcated in 1990. With 9 Community Development Blocks Eastern part became the East Singhbhum with Jamshedpur as its district Headquarter and with remaining 23 C.D. Blocks West Singhbhum with Chaibasa as its district Hqr. In 2001 West Singhbhum is again divided in two parts. With 8 Blocks Saraikela-Kharsawan district came into existence. At present the West Singhbhum remained with 15 blocks and two administrative Sub-divisions. The district is full of hills alternating with valleys, steep mountains, and deep forests on the mountain slopes. The district contains one of the best Sal forests and the SARANDA (seven hundred hills) forest area is known world over. Scenically it is beautiful with water holes and also contains wild life like Elephants, Bison, rarely found tigers & panthers, bear, wild dogs, wild pigs. Sambhar, deer and spotted deer are also found but their numbers are decreasing in the forests adjoining habitation. There are two versions relating to the origin of the name of the district. According to one of the version the name Singhbhum, or the lands of "SINGHS" has been derived from the patronymic of the Singh Rajas of Porahat. The second version suggests that the name is a corrupt form of the SinghBonga the Principal deity of tribal population of the district. West Singhbhum forms part

of the southern fringe of the Chhotanagpur plateau and is a highly upland tract. There are hills alternating with plains, steep mountains, and deep forests on the mountain slope.

The district is the second largest district with predominating schedule tribes in Jharkhand. The geographical area of the district is 5.19 lakh hectares. Chaibasa being the district headquarter all the district level offices are located here. The district has 2 sub divisions, 15 blocks, 204 panachayats and 1692 revenue villages. The total population of West Singhbhum is 12,31,958 wherein the male & female population is 618073 and 613885 (Census 2001).

#### West Singhbhum (Chaibasa)



The tribal population of West Singhbhum is **706170**. The district of West Singhbhum has a canopy of forests and hills. 1,365 Sq. Km. of forest area constitute 33% of the total land area. 70% of the population of the area belong to the below poverty line group that depend on forest, agriculture and daily wage labour for their livelihood. The literacy rate of the district is 38.54%

**Overall objective - To enable and strengthen the poor single and destitute women and their child to ensure food security and reduce poverty in the target area.**

#### Specific objective –

1. To organized and mobilize poor single women families towards food security.
2. To motivate the single women to formulate an effective mechanism for food security and distribution system.
3. To formation of self help groups among the single women and link to the financial institutions for sustenance and livelihood
4. To build their capacity towards entitlement to Govt. Schemes especially food and livelihood related schemes.
5. Strengthen the block level single women association for participation in the gram sabha meetings to raise demand towards NREGA, PDS, Midday meals widow and old age pension etc.
6. To undertake advocacy with Govt. and people representative to create special priority in all development schemes

**Purpose of the project - To improve the life of poor and marginalized single women of the selected area by establishing their food right and entitlement.**

**Strategy applied –**

- Develop capacity of Project staffs relating to the problems of single women issues of the excluded communities , to help the CBOs (single women groups/federations) to raise their voice.

- Capacity building of the CBOs (individual/single women groups/federations/district committees) to raise their voice against non-entitlement of Govt schemes, accessing land, other resources , education for their children & violence against single women.

-- Create a cadre base of single women-led groups/institutions to represent in various level of the Single Women Groups and Government decision making bodies in GP, Block, District level

- Campaign on food security & land entitlement was organized by single women groups to have more voice within the groups and Govt. decision making bodies on single women issues.

-Creation of a learning & doing system & self help atmosphere to improve and make their life better.

- Policy advocacy, lobbying & right based campaign to make the Govt. Serviceproviders more responsive and liable.

- Advocacy and lobbying to groom the single women headed families to entitle them possession over family resources, community resources, business ownership & Govt. lands.

- SMS & its net partner will document all event, progress & learning of various activities through photography, video, case study, MIS & make its wide dissemination.

- Establish links with the District, State and National level forums for wide dissemination of 'Single Women Issue' learning

**Executive Summary –**

**Intervention to reach the objective –**

## **Baseline study**

The need of the baseline study is to know the actual status of the single women in the area on parameters such as access to and benefits from entitlements, (a) realization of quota on Welfare Scheme, (b) NREGS-based optimum employment realization, (c) education & health services, (d) social security and (e) land issues and (f) basic human rights etc. The survey focused on identifying hunger-prone Women headed families. At the end of the survey hunger and poverty was identified.

This baseline surveys will guide the path to ensure food security and hunger check that will serve as a small step towards poverty alleviation and a database will be developed on the key findings as directions for future reference to the Govt. authorities.

The baseline survey and its findings will trace out and analyse their true position be it economic, social, political or cultural. It was conducted in such a way that their life style, living conditions, social dignity and economic captivity surface out and the exposure leads to the problem areas.

The survey was took place in four blocks namely Manoharpur, Sonua, Chakardharpur, Chaibasa. In the west Singhbhum district. The total number of single woman covered in the baseline survey was 4,514 representing the aforesaid four blocks of West Singhbhum district. It was found that only 4% of the single women had adequate food for the whole year. 60% had rations available for 1-4 months, 24% for 5-10 months and 12% of the women had no source of income and were dependant on family and friends. In terms of access to BPL cards, it was found that only 27% had access to them. Only 30% of single women were registered job card holders for the MNREGA. The income of the women was also extremely limited. Poverty, hunger death and helpless was what we found during the survey, nobody among the women surveyed had ample amount of food for themselves or their families.

### **Factors of Vulnerability:**

- Identity crisis of the single women
- Majority singe women are below poverty line
- Lack of employment & self-employment opportunities through the year
- Lack of food security through the year
- Unable to demand and access entitlements & welfare schemes
- Neglected & ill treated by the community & society at large
- No assured means of economic support
- Deprived from BPL category, PDS system, ration cards in their name & deprived of permanent residents
- Face insurmountable hardship to acquire land entitlement
- Inadequate facilities for skill development & self-help initiatives
- Possibility of disowned from the property by the other family members/community members
- Threats of Molestation & rape of the young single women
- Domestic violence at the household level

## **2. Findings:**

- The condition of poor single women is pathetic and vulnerable
- 4216 single women are in the project area
- 1331 children are of single women families out of which 145 aged below 5 years, 603 are 6-14 years, 583 are 14-18 years
- 1022 children are attending school and 309 children are left out of school
- 145 children attended Anganwadi center and 877 children attended primary & secondary school
- All school going children getting mid-day meal at school
- 92 single women migrated for job for 3 months where as 312 women migrated for 3-6 months
- Only 276 single women having land availability where as 3940 don't have land availability
- 219 single women having BPL Card and 929 having Red Card
- 1251 SMS got the MGNREGA Job Card
- IYA assistance received by 421 single women and Birsa Awas Yajana by 10 women
- 177 Old age pension, 708 widow pension, 33 social security pension, and 32 handicapped pension
- 929 Ration card, 797 Antoyadaya card and, 33 Annapurna card
- 28 single women are in APL category which only 0.66%
- 495 single women are maintain their livelihood only from daily income & their condition are worst most, where as 2527 having only 4 months food security
- 997 single women having 5-10 months food security and only 197 women having round the year food security

## **3. Recommendations:**

- Sensitization of District level officials & other Stakeholders so that all available Govt. assistance reach to the Single Women to ensure food security
- Orientation of Single women required on a sustained basis so that they can unite in groups, create pressure to the Gram Panchayet, Block & District authorities through deputation & demonstration to fulfill their needs
- All single women need individual bank account to receive the Govt. assistance through bank as well as savings of own money
- Common Interest Groups could be promoted to meet the problems of the single women with their own at the local level and access credit facilities form bank to start income generation program
- Skill building training required for CAG members to enhance their skills of the various income generation activities. The skill on modern technology application on crop cultivation, vegetable cultivation, small animals raring, small trade, value addition of forest produce & marketing of products to get better price
- Training of Single women on Leadership on various govt. entitlements and schemes and rightful access of the rightful beneficiary, monitoring and control over the various govt. resources to ensure their entitlements

- Govt. Scheme specific training i.e. MGNREGA, PDS, Various pension, Housing etc. required for the single women to know the detail of the scheme so that no one will be able to exploit them
- For creation of pressure action program required like Rally, Dharna, Submission of Memorandum of Demand and Lobbying etc.
- Linking the single women with various Govt. welfare schemes i.e. Antodayo, Annapurna, Old age pension and Disabled pension etc.
- Advocacy through various IEC materials on the issue to the single women as well as the wider community
- Required regular monitoring & reflection meeting with the groups to solve ongoing problems
- Campaign on land and property Rights for Single women
- Yearly convention of the single women for sharing of best practices and achievements for motivation to others
- Organize District & State level workshop for wider advocacy for policy changes in favour of the single women

## **2. Organisation building & strengthening**

SMS has targeted to address Single women issue in the project since it is engaged for the past four years working for this section of the society. An association has formed namely Ekal Nari Sashakti Sangathan (ENSS) Jharkhand

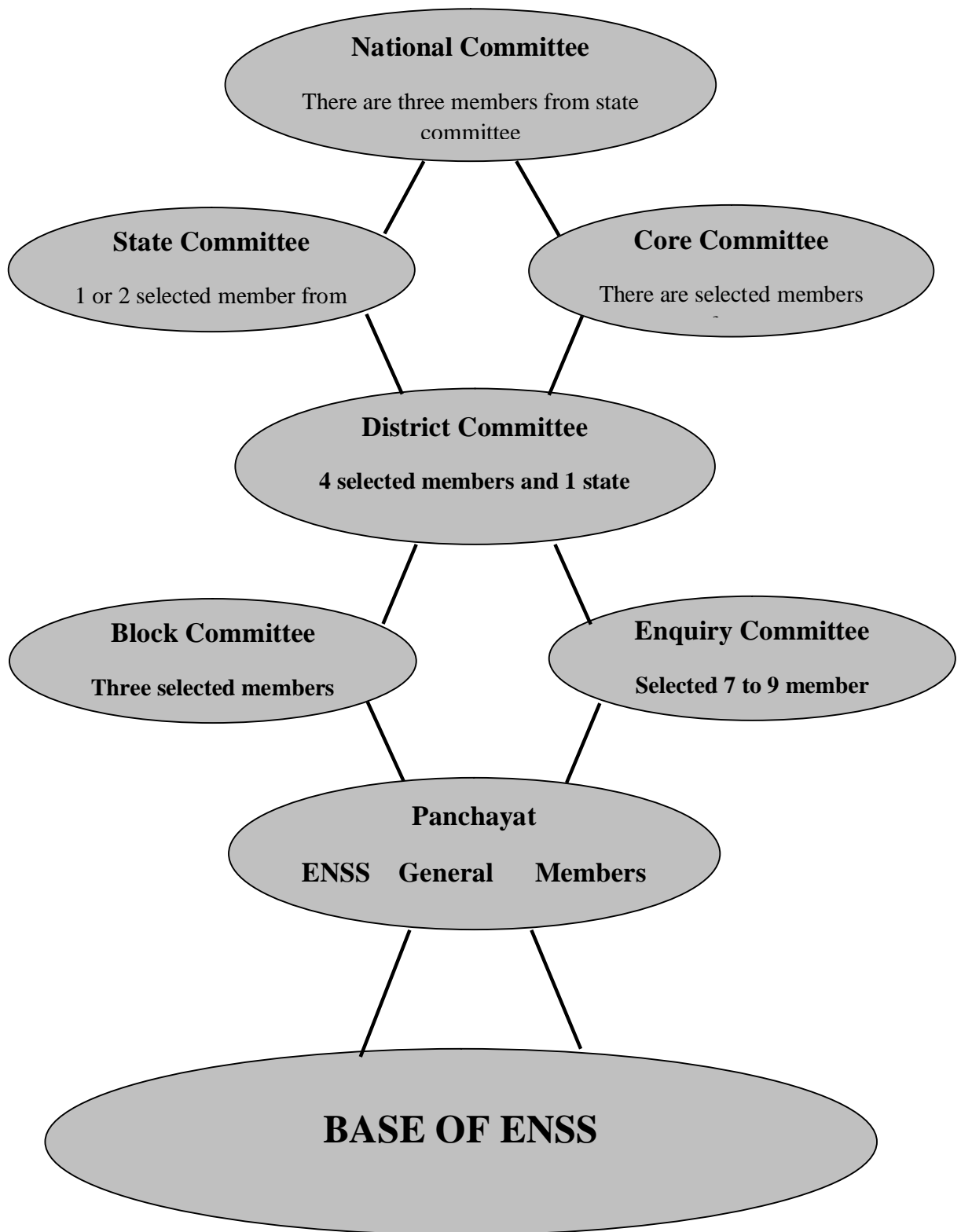
ENSS recognizes that its strength lies in numbers in West Singhbhum. In the last three years, it has also recognized that a widespread presence is essential to be able to influence state government. Local officials too, respond with respect when they know that the sangathan has a mass base.

This is planned through building leadership from the village, panchayat, block, district to state level. Leadership among women is required to support each other when faced by violence and discrimination within the family and society. To access basic rights to government services such as pensions, ration cards and housing women are enabled to come together and demand accountability from local officers. In brief, following interventions are planned within the framework of a rights based approach to development.

- Organization building of strong single women in 4blocks of West Singhbhum.
- Leadership development – Strengthening the single women with knowledge of the law and government policies and programmes to access their rights
- Strengthening the organization, the Association of Empowered Single Women in West Singhbhum, Jharkhand

The Structure of ENSS can be seen below.





Through the membership Drive the association is expanded and spread wide. In every block committee there are 03 members selected from every Panchayats. They are mainly responsible for joining the single women from different parts of Jharkhand into the association of single women. The Panchayat members are generally responsible to visit the utmost interior parts of the village. They speak to each and every women. And not any single women are left unattended.

The Panchayat members do meetings at the village level or Tola level to get close contacts with these single women. They inform them about the association, its working process, about the way the single women cases are solved and many more details of the association. Finally when the single women think that there is a right platform for her to fight against her struggles. The member also details about the membership campaign of uniting the single women to form their association. After being fully convinced the Single women manages to give Rs. 10/- for becoming the member of the “Ekal Nari Shashakti Sangathan” for life time. When she becomes the member by giving Rs. 10/-, she also gets a membership receipt which remains with her for life long.

The member from the Panchayat after collecting the amount from single women residing at remote areas and at different parts of the state, deposit it to the block level committee. And finally the signatory members of the block level committee opens the bank account in the bank. The members write on application, along with that puts the resolution made by the committee and deposit the amount accumulated in the bank.

The most important level of intervention at present in the programme is the Block. Here the Committee Members selected from different Panchayats come together to investigate cases of violence, discrimination and denial of land and property rights within the family. The Block is also the administrative unit where women are able to demand access to government schemes. While selection of beneficiaries for social welfare schemes is done at the Panchayat and theoretically by the Gram Sabha, the Block is where decisions are finalized and grievances are redressed.

## Access & entitled Govt welfare Schemes –

Right since its inception the Project ENSS has been a pioneer in ensuring single women their proper rights in the various entitlement programmes. The association has always played a lead role in the linkage of single women to the various govt. schemes. It is the responsibility of the association to collect applications on behalf of the single women for various welfare programmes and jointly make application and submit them to the concerned dept and also make-up regular follow ups to find out the progress of the applications & access by single women as a joint effort.

During the project period the Single women in 4 blocks has gone a step ahead and made efforts to sensitize the govt. through rallies, protests, demand memorandum etc. at subsequent levels of block, district and state. The govt. has pioneered the cause of single women and supported their issues, hence entitlement and linkage to the various welfare policies floated by the govt. of the single women was undertaken.

However, beyond the scope of the project and adherence to the objectives i.e., empowerment of women and sustainability of the single women, the 3 year project period saw ----- wherein ----- applications have been generated and ----- have been beneficiaries.

Hence they are better equipped to know and access the various entitlement programmes. During this Three years ----- applications submitted by the -----single women for the various entitlement programmes wherein ----- no of application was approved by the local govt. and ----- single women have received the benefits under the various schemes.

As described in the table below;

Antyoday	Annapurna	Widow Pension	Indra Aavas	Family Benefit	Income Certificate	Handicap Pension	Job Card
Apply/Benefited 45/40	A/B 432/263	A/B 1541/1358	A/B 673/338	A/B 24/37	A/B 1711/812	A/B 37/25	A/B 1466/1381

Old age Pension	Paddy distribution	Bicycle Distribution	Seed Distribution	Social Security	Job Application	Kisan Cr. Card
A/B 775/473	A/B 10/10	A/B 60/60	A/B 8/8	A/B 121/60	A/B 1073/741	A/B 28/18

The financial benefit accruing to the women is enormous. The table below shows estimated benefits (at a conservative level):

**Table 1 Financial Benefits Accessed through Government Scheme**

No	Name of the scheme	Application	Beneficiary	Year/amount/age	Total Amount in Rs.
01	Widow Pension	5219	2402	Rs.400x12 month x12 year x 2402	13,83,55,200
02	Old Age Pension	3927	1307	10 yearsx400x 12x1307	6,27,36,000
03	Indira Awas	837	243	25000x243	60,75,000
04	Red Card	1375	490	350x12x490	20,58,000
05	Job Application	2517	1819	100x35daysx1819	63,66,500
06	Sahiya	101	78	700x12x30x78	63,66,500
07	Antodaya	88	56	350x12x56x15	35,28,000
08	Family Benefits	221	97	10000x97	9,70,000
09	Handicapped Pension	73	47	400x12x25yearsx47	56,40,000
10	Annapurna	107	65	100x12x5yearsx65	3,90,000
11	Drought Relief Fund	1143	772	100Rsx6monthsx772	4,63,200
	<b>Total</b>	<b>15608</b>	<b>7376</b>		<b>24,62,37,900</b>

**7376** single women benefited out of **15608** with an amount of Rs. **24,62,37,900** to date.

The benefits are calculated in a conservative manner for example pensions for a period of 12 years when women access for a much longer period.

Calculating the Cost Benefit Analysis, we find the ratio to be 1:37 (1:36.75). If we compare this with development projects such as watersheds, where the rate of return of 1:1.5 or 1:2 is considered a successful project, we can clearly see that ENSS has shown dramatic results. The access to benefits also highlights how single women are usually defrauded of their benefits and only by coming together, they are able to access their due rights.



19 groups out of applied 55 got linkage to the SGSY scheme.

- Sri Sai single self help group was granted loan for the second time as they repaid the first amount of RS.25,000/-, this time the bank sanctioned the amount of RS.2,50,000/- for the vegetable farming.
- Five other groups got grant for the direct loan.

### **Capacity building on new technological intervention for Livelihood generation-**

The Base line study highlights one of the major aspects that to ensure a decent livelihood and dignity for single women. The access to government services in the form of pensions, BPL cards etc, while extremely important and necessary, does not provide for an adequate living income. The pension provided to widows is Rs. 400 per month. A young widowed woman with 6 children can hardly sustain herself on this. In the project period, it was essential that SMS explores different means for increasing incomes of single women. As a result of their advocacy, the Districts administration considering providing 10 Kgs of food grains per single women even without a BPL card.

This is a new intervention started during the project period to connect the single women directly to the food security and to encourage them to earn a better livelihood.

**Backyard land utilization-** In total 4 blocks 1000 single women were inspired to adopt vegetable production and kitchen garden system, plantation of prolific trees were also started. Initiative was taken to make women understand the kitchen garden system and utilize it for their livelihood and perform it in the area around or in their own land. 748 member of C I G and 252 Panchayat committee members took initiative in the following process. This system will give food security and assured livelihood to the single women in the region.

A list was prepared of Members of CIG from all 4 blocks and from the nearest nursery each single women were provided with 2 timber plants, 3 prolific plants and 7 different types of seeds of the vegetables grown in the winter season. They were distributed plants according to the condition of the land owned by them. They were explained about the process of the activity before the plantation and also about the sowing and harvesting process.

Knowledge on the food security and livelihood, they also found the value addition from production to marketing their products which boosted the self confidence of the single women. Increase in the helping tendency, value of the collective farming and nutrition food intake, it has also shown a ray of hope of a better livelihood for such women.

**Rice Production through SRI Technique-** From 4 Panchayat 9 villages 110 single women use 1400 decimal land for the paddy cultivation, 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the project 20 women experimented on this technique and it was proofed that their production was increased by 2.5%, so 3rd year targeted 110 women directly for the food security, this is practised only in the Souna block for piloting basis.

110 single women were provided with abhishek quality seeds, the seeds were treated and were planted in the nursery bed and after 15 days the paddy is replanted on the field. After

each fifteen days weedier machine is scampers the other plants and grasses so that they act as the manure to the original crop.

- Saving cost on the seed as this Technique needs only 1.5 kg seeds per 1 acre land.
- It has increased the production of the crop by 2.5%.
- Single women using SRI technique has gained knowledge about the technicality of the farming.
- 110 single women are getting food secured for the whole year.
- Advantages of the organic farming were brought into light.
- Disadvantages and the harms of the fertilizer and effects on the land were taught.

**Seed distribution-** In the targeted four blocks 1000 single women were provided seeds of 7 different vegetables grown in the winter season, 748 CIG women, 252 Panchayat Committee members respectively. The seeds were distributed to those women who are already involved in the collective farming through CIG and to those women who owned even a small size land so that they can earn a livelihood through the utilization of the assets, have nutritional food and be food secured for the rest of the year.

The seeds to the CIG members involved in the collective farming were distributed during the CIG meeting, each group were provided with 1.5 kg of seeds for the farming, whereas the single women farmer were provided seeds according to the acres of the land they owned.

- The women were encouraged for collective and vegetable farming.
- Distribution of the seeds helped them to utilize their courtyard land in a better way.
- Once the crops are cultivated they get access to the nutritional food and livelihood for them and their children.

## **Outcome and impact of the project –**

Learning

Withdrawal plan –

Conclusion -