

Economic Empowerment for Women

Tearfund Canada's India partner EFICOR has worked for years among the Malto ethnic community in eastern Jharkhand State, and currently implement a Tearfund supported project called 'Amrapara Food Security' among about 750 families.

The Maltos have traditionally retreated into the hills avoiding unnecessary contact with the outside world, doing their own hunting and farming to survive. With the heavy population of India now, other people have moved beside them, often getting access to their land through the Maltos lack of education and bad financial management.

EFICOR and the Indian government have tried to provide a variety of social services for the poor of India, so increasingly, contact is being made, and trust built that 'outsiders' are trustworthy. One of those services in Self-Help Groups (SHGs, or micro-finance savings & loan groups) for women, who are often marginalized, have lower education than men and tend not to speak regional languages like Hindi. EFICOR is working to ensure these groups in the Amrapara Food Security Project function well, and in dozens of cases where its deemed appropriate, they also give some additional stimulus for economic empowerment.



One of those SHG members selected for additional support was Mrs. Salome Paharin, who received an electric sewing machine, with the proviso that she pays back the soft loan in a fixed time.

Salome was happy for this assistance as they have 5 people (including 3 children) in their family, who live in the village of Durmachir Pahad. She used to rent a pedal-powered sewing machine, but it was relatively slow, and the rent cut into her profits. With three kids she appreciates being at home. Now with the village having a road to it, and fairly reliable electricity she can work at sewing when she is able. Even when the electricity isn't available, she has the option of using the pedal power.

Salome informs us that with this machine she earns Rupees 800-1,200 per week (\$ 13-20/week), and with that, she is able to buy food, save money to pay back the soft loan, as well as have some cash on hand for emergencies. She no longer feels the financial pressure she was under when renting a machine and feels the future is bright.

Tearfund Canada is one of the 7 members of CFGB supported by Bluewater Growing Project.

