

Dairying... more than a helping hand

Navliben Chaturbhai Bhabhor of Shahada village, Dahod, Gujarat, a habitual migrant, has had to bear the brunt of uncertain income from her land due to scarce water and no irrigation. Her family had to live in penury until 2002 when she took upon some petty work as bead worker making some necklaces and selling them, but the effort had



to be discontinued due to weakening of the ocular strength. During 2003, in an internal exposure visit to *Chosala* village where a women dairy cooperative society was functioning, Navliben could see the vibrancy that the women members had been exhibiting through this rural institution.

Motivated by the exposure visit, Navliben mustered courage to buy two buffaloes from Dhuleta village, Umreth tehsil, Anand district in 2007. She managed to borrow Rs 8000 from SHG and another Rs 8000 she received as grant from the government. A local NGO, at the same time, trained them in dairy husbandry practices including milking of animal, a task requiring appropriate skill. The women DCS, as patronised by NDDDB, started its journey with 10 members in 2007, increased to 51 in 2014. During 2008-2014, Navliben increased her herd size by purchasing 3 more buffaloes and now owns 5 milch buffaloes and a pregnant heifer. Currently, 3 buffaloes are in-milk and with a total production of 17.5 litres, 16 litres is sold to cooperative at average price of Rs 35 per litre.



Work in progress: Navliben's pucca-kachha dwelling

Income from sale of milk has been more than agricultural income that has brought about qualitative improvement in her family- - constructing pucca house, buying durable assets, children education, installing well for portable water and quality food consumption.

Agricultural incomes have also improved thanks to improvement in soil fertility. Buoyed by her

improvement in social status she has continued her investments in income generating activities and in fact leased in 2 bighas of land by paying ₹ 50,000 as annual lease value and grow green and dry fodder.

Being in tribal area of Dahod district, she has received various benefits from welfare schemes-- chaff cutter, stainless steel vessel, bucket, feeding bowl, *pucca* manger, cement floor of cow shed, iron rope, iron sheets, cement pillars for cattle shed- - all have favourably contributed in augmenting family income from dairying.

She actively participates in Panchayat meetings as well as in 'Gram Sabha' and raises development issues. She points out that initially men used to be circumspect about their wives joining WDCSs, but visibility in income enhancement through women DCS, such sentiments are thing of the past. During peak flush season, she earns around ₹ 15,000 a month from dairying. She now has more time at her disposal for pursuing other activities- - earlier she used to go out for 2-3 hours a day for fetching fuel wood, but now cow dung cake is available in his backyard for energy use. Navliben now operates a bank account, avails loan from bank for purchase of a tempo locally called '*chhota hathee*' which augments her income and continues to service the loan.

