Case Study: Story of Meena Devi

Meena Devi is a fishpreneur from Payagpur block in Bahraich. She grew up as the only child of farmer parents, in a life that was simple and hardworking. Marriage, however, **changed her world overnight**. She moved into a household of 22 members and, at a very young age, found herself responsible for caring for three children, before she even had three daughters of her own. The casual sexism she faced in everyday life never sat right with her. She had never believed women were any less capable than men. Even while carrying the weight of domestic work very early on in her married life, Meena chose to challenge these roles and decided to build something of her own, marking the beginning of her journey as an **entrepreneur**.

Her **inclusion in the SHG** changed her life, as she began to see the possibility of what her life could be. Her biggest motivation is for **her daughters to study and find empowerment** in this new, **changed India where women take the beacon and lead the way**. Her daughters study in primary school, and her aspiration to provide for them took her on a journey to become a **fishpreneur**. She heard about the scheme and went on an exposure visit to see exactly what it is and what it can be for her and her family. The trust in the model was built through the **subsidy under PMMSY** and the **buy-back guarantee** at a competitive rate, which reduced the apparent risks and gave her the confidence to start. The low-interest loan from the CLF paved the way to the completion of processes. And there it was, **a tank established in her own backyard**. It looked overwhelming at first, but glimpses of **training** and the **on-site technical support** from the state helped her in this journey of empowerment. Perfecting her skills and expertise in the first cycle, she is excited to start her second cycle with a strong base, aspiring to become a **Lakhpati Did**i from bio-floc fishery alone.

What seemed scary at first was eased by continuous handholding and easy-to-understand training. **Singhi** is the fish being reared under this fishery model. It is a hardy species that grows well even in **muddy waters** and **commands good market prices**, higher than other breeds of catfish. The work becomes easy after a while, as the fish are fed before sunrise and after sunset, which leaves the entire day free for other personal and professional activities. **Bio-floc** technology, **built for environment-friendly backyard fishery**, requires less water change and low feed, as bio-floc converts ammonia into highly nutritious feed for the fish. Even though the handholding was present, it doesn't mean there were no challenges. Delays in payments, mortality, and other blockers challenge her confidence from time to time. But entrepreneurship is nothing but navigating through such challenges and coming out **stronger** on the other end. The confidence to take on these challenges was also eased by collectivisation through the formation of **producer groups**, where other fishpreneurs also joined in for synergy.

"आजकल समय के साथ ज़रूरतें भी बढ़ती जा रही हैं, और उस हिसाब से खर्चे भी। ऐसे में खाली बैठकर देखने से अच्छा है कि हम खुद आगे बढ़कर काम करें। ज़िंदगी जो भी चुनौतियाँ सामने रखे, हम उन्हें जीतकर आगे बढ़ेंगे। अब पीछे मुड़कर देखने का सवाल ही नहीं है।"

Meena Devi even **trained her mother** in the intricacies of handling fish, and in the new cycle, even her mother plans to apply for a tank of her own, making her mother an empowered woman, something rare for her generation.

Meena Devi's dreams are big, and she is unstoppable. In her very first cycle, she earned more than ₹50,000 by selling the harvested produce. When combined with the ₹30,000 subsidy under PMMSY, her annual income crosses ₹80,000. With the basics in place and her initial questions answered, she now plans to earn even more in the second cycle. In the long run, she dreams of owning a "Poshan Aahaar Factory" with the support of

UPSRLM, taking her journey further towards creating value and building a legacy for her family, and paving the way to becoming a “**Crorepati Didi**” very soon.