

# “Economic Empowerment of Rural Women through Mushroom Farming in Kalahandi, Odisha”

Name of the Department:	MCID
Name of the programme:	Livelihood & Enterprise Development Programme on Mushroom cultivation
No. of programmes conducted	(2) 180 WSHG members
PIA:	MAHASHAKTI FOUNDATION

**1. Problem Statement:** The Rural economy of Kalahandi district, Odisha largely depends on agricultural.

The livelihood is invariably affected with failure of crop due to natural calamities, droughts, pest attacks and feminine like situations. Which leads to distress migration of the poor during lean season. The forest habitation communities mainly depend on NTFP collection, but completely vanished in the area and the dependents are in vulnerable situation.



**Mushroom Unit-Talasagar Pada**

Women’s lack of participation is deeply rooted in age-old patriarchal structures where women do not have the same opportunities as men. Literacy remains a



**Women are busy in straw cutting, sterilizing**

prominent factor as several women do not have access to education or higher education in some cases. The lack of opportunity in education coupled with societal norms such as staying at home after getting married and fulfilling family

obligations leads to unequal participation in the workforce. Moreover, women also spend more time doing domestic chores and unpaid work, about 25 per cent of their time, whereas men only pay 2.5 per cent of their time for the same job. The skill gap remains a considerable concern for working women to be promoted to leadership or higher positions.

2. **Counteracted Actions:** with the support of NABARD 2 phases of LEDP project implemented in M. Rampur and Lanjigarh blocks through SHG members and



**Women preserved straw for year-round cultivation**

women youth collectives. The members showed keen interest in Mushroom cultivation; accordingly, the group members were trained various aspects like skills on mushroom, SHG management and

sustainable agriculture.

The private successful entrepreneurs, Govt officials (OLM, Mission Shakti) attended as the resource persons to provide support and trained the women on collection of raw material, seeds, and market linkages. Request has been made to OLM to include under “Producers Group” scheme of OLM, which is under process.

The members had been thoroughly trained—from cutting, wetting and sterilising straw to final bed preparation—by technical experts through practical demonstrations. The group was supplied with all the inputs required to prepare mushroom beds and a proper follow up for the management of beds was conducted.

With the required support, the women gained confidence to take up mushroom farming as a subsidiary vocation. The members successfully prepared demonstration units and mushroom beds. Mushroom cultivation is a low-cost business which requires minimal start-up capital and limited space. An average yield of 1.2 kg per

bed in the case of paddy straw mushrooms could fetch them from INR 250 to INR 280 per bed, while the cost of raising a bed is INR 50. The income generated from mushroom cultivation would enable sustainable development, and enhance women's decision-making power in the home and the community.



**Intensive training by Master Trainer**

Prior to expanding livelihood

opportunities through mushroom farming, they used to be solely dependent on forest produce and manual labour to arrange for two square meals a day.

### 3. **Project Learnings:**

Mushroom farming is an agricultural activity well suited to the arid regions for varied reasons such as:

#### a. Mushroom

production is an indoor activity using vertical space hence does not compete with agricultural land thus suited to small farmers, farm women and landless labourers.



**Mushroom cultivation-Women's collective**

#### b. Many

agricultural

wastes can be

utilized to produce quality food and organic manure in field crops. Besides mushrooms have high biological efficiency i.e., conversion of dry substances into fresh mushroom.

c. It can generate self-employment, alleviate poverty, and improve socio economic status of women and youth in the rural areas.



**Mushroom promotion**

d. It can provide nutritional security

particularly for poor people through incorporating mushrooms in their diet.

e. Met the need for regular additional income.

f. Good demand of mushroom in the market and door step marketing is available.

#### 4. **Challenges**

a. Non availability of quality spawn, the area has no spawn producing unit.

b. Knowledge gap and poor adoption of packing & grading practices.

c. The higher technological gap in case of compost making, casing preparation and crop management practices may be due the reason that these cultivation practices require skills and sufficient finances, lengthy as well as cumbersome process.

#### 5. **Results/Impacts**

→ The results and outcome further substantiated that due to adoption of this entrepreneur, their income, nutritional security, standard of living and position in the society has also improved a lot.

→ Mushroom cultivation is not only of economic importance but also has important role to play in integrated rural development programme by increasing income and self-employment opportunities among the rural/tribal women.



**Encouragement by different officials**

➔ This enterprise is also eco-friendly. Used compost and straw are again be utilized as organic manure, animal feed and for amendment of soil. Waste and barren land can be converted to mushroom farms. Mushroom cultivation is also cultivated by landless labourers as it is cultivated, indoors and in additional small floor areas, the vertical space can also be utilized judiciously.

#### **6. Sustainability**

96 percent of the mushroom growers have planned to perennial cultivation through Oyster and Straw mushroom.

#### **7. Socio-economic benefits**

80 percent of farmers found that mushroom cultivation required a low amount of inputs and less labour effort.

#### **8. Environmental/natural resource management co-benefits**

60 percent of farmers affirmed that mushrooms can be grown using limited amounts of water.

#### **9. Farmers reactions**

- All farmers declared that they would be willing to replicate this disaster risk reduction (DRR) good practice technology in all the seasons.
- 72 percent of the farmers explicitly mentioned that straw mushrooms are “easy to grow”.
- They reported that growing straw mushrooms is a good practice because of low investment needs (inputs and labor), and they are able to have a production and income during the dry season.
- Furthermore, 79 percent of all farmers noted that mushrooms need less water than other crops, and about 80 percent appreciated the reduced labor efforts required.
- Finally, about 60 percent of farmers stressed that mushrooms contributed to diversifying their diets, also impacted on their nutritional status
- 80 percent of the women reflected as improved their status quo in the society by means of improved financial status.

#### **10. Conclusion**

Conclusively, it is established that mushroom cultivation can be adopted as profitable agro-entrepreneur by rural women successfully and it has been envisaged that due to the adoption of this venture, there was not no need to go outside home for work as sufficient employment opportunity is available at home itself. It is also impacted on reduced distress migration. Mushroom as a nutritious food. Whereas the western Odisha suffering from acute mal-nutrition. It will also help in eliminating protein malnutrition among people primarily dependent on cereals and offer remunerative employment. Women force will get another dimension of the entrepreneurial skill among effort in direction which would lead to a better human resource development “When women move forward the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves.”