

From Farmer to Entrepreneur: How TPWODL's 'Project Sakshama' Initiative is Transforming Women's Lives in Western Odisha

The story of award-winning farmer-entrepreneur Sarita Bara demonstrates how women-led agricultural enterprises are creating sustainable livelihoods and strengthening farming communities across Western Odisha.

Every season, hundreds of vegetable seedlings leave Sarita Bara's nursery in Domposh village of Sundargarh district and reach farms across the region. Behind each sapling is the inspiring journey of a tribal woman who transformed farming from a means of subsistence into a thriving enterprise.

Today, Sarita is recognised as one of Sundargarh's leading women agri-entrepreneurs. Earlier this year, she received the prestigious **Samman Award** as the Best Woman Horticulture Farmer of the district from the Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and the district administration—a recognition of her entrepreneurial spirit and contribution to sustainable agriculture.

Agriculture is the backbone of western Odisha's rural economy, yet many farmers continue to face challenges in accessing quality planting material, technical guidance and timely agricultural services. To bridge this gap, TP Western Odisha Distribution Limited (TPWODL), through **Anokha Dhaaga**—its flagship CSR programme—launched '**Project Sakshama**', a livelihood initiative with its implementing partner '**Pradan**' that identifies, trains and nurtures Women Agri-Entrepreneurs to deliver essential agricultural services while building sustainable livelihoods for themselves.

Sarita was among the women selected under the programme.

With training in nursery management, entrepreneurship and market linkages, she established a soilless nursery that supplies quality vegetable saplings to local farmers. Using cocopeat and vermicompost instead of soil, the nursery produces healthier seedlings with stronger roots and higher survival rates, helping farmers improve productivity.

The nursery has transformed Sarita's own livelihood as well. By supplying quality seedlings to farmers at the right time, she has created an additional source of income of nearly **₹60,000 annually**, while helping farmers diversify beyond traditional mono-cropping and adopt higher-value vegetable cultivation. Scientific nursery management practices promoted through the initiative have also contributed to a **10–12 per cent increase in crop productivity**.

"Earlier, farming was mainly a means of supporting our family. Through the nursery enterprise, I realised that agriculture can also create opportunities for growth and financial independence. Today, I take pride in helping fellow farmers access quality seedlings and improve their yields. Seeing other women gain confidence and adopt improved farming practices gives me immense satisfaction," says Sarita.

Sarita's journey is part of a larger transformation unfolding through 'Project Sakshama'. The initiative has supported **nine women entrepreneurs** in establishing agriculture and allied enterprises, including **four soilless nurseries** and **five Mother Chick Units**, creating a decentralised agricultural support network across Sundargarh district.

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The impact has been far-reaching. Nearly **4,100 women farmers** have benefited from access to quality planting material, technical guidance and climate-smart agricultural practices. Improved backyard poultry interventions have enhanced household incomes and nutritional security, while the women entrepreneurs supported under ‘Project Sakshama’ collectively generated **over ₹3.56 lakh** in income during the last financial year, demonstrating the power of women-led enterprises to drive economic and social progress at the grassroots.

Commenting on the initiative, **Mr Parveen Verma, CEO, TPWODL**, said, *"Through Anokha Dhaaga, TPWODL is committed to creating sustainable livelihood opportunities by empowering communities to become self-reliant. ‘Project Sakshama’ demonstrates how investing in women entrepreneurs can strengthen local agricultural ecosystems while creating lasting socio-economic impact. Sarita's journey is an inspiring example of how knowledge, enterprise and community support can transform lives."*

Today, Sarita's nursery produces much more than healthy vegetable seedlings. It nurtures confidence, entrepreneurship and hope—demonstrating how the right opportunities can transform individual lives while creating lasting change for farming communities. Through Anokha Dhaaga and initiatives such as ‘Project Sakshama’, TPWODL continues to empower women, strengthen rural livelihoods and build resilient communities across western Odisha.

About TPWODL: TP Western Odisha Distribution Limited is a joint venture between [Tata Power](#) and the Government of Odisha, with a 51:49 shareholding respectively. [TPWODL](#) is responsible for electricity distribution and retail supply across western Odisha, serving more than 2 million consumers across nine districts and a distribution area of approximately 48,000 square kilometres. The company is committed to delivering reliable, safe, and customer-centric power services while driving network modernization, operational excellence, digital transformation, sustainability, and community development initiatives. Through continuous investments in infrastructure, technology, and customer service, TPWODL aims to support the socio-economic growth of western Odisha and contribute to the region's energy transition journey.

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