

Abject Poverty to a life with dignity: Miles walked

Mornings are usually hectic and chaotic for Nasima Bibi. From getting ready to start the day's business to managing the household, getting the children ready for school, she has loads on her plate. Nasima resides in a congested slum of Mathopara, in Rajarhat Gopalpur Municipality, Kolkata. Nasima is a domestic worker, and her husband is a daily wage earner, the couple is blessed with a 7 year son and a 5 year old daughter. Once the children leave for school the couple hurries to their grocery shop where they take turns to work.

Nasima attending to a customer in her grocery shop



Not long time back, it was difficult for Nasima to make ends meet with the meagre wages that they were earning. She was even contemplating to withdraw the children from school. When she shared her predicaments with the other SHG members of her group-Milan Swanirvar Goshti, together they decided that she can start grocery business. LWSIT adopted this community way back in 2005, after which this SHG was formed to empower the women both economically and socially. She took loan of Rs 6,200 from the SHG and initiated the business, a couple of months back with the help of both LWSIT and the SHG. After repaying the monthly instalments against her loan, she is able to save a decent amount every month. This business initiative has given her and her family a sense of dignity, leading her to quit working in a number of houses as domestic help. However, she continues to work in just one household where she gets due respect.

The majority women of the Mathopara slum are domestic workers- the most vulnerable section of the society who does not have any kind of monetary as well as social security to fall back on. Inspired by the achievements and success of Nasima, 3 women SHG have been formed in the community with guidance from LWSIT. These SHG members are keen to empower themselves and enhance their quality of living.

Nasima is an active member of the SHG, also an active participant in all the various training conducted by LWSIT. Nasima aspires to have a permanent shop whereby she can expand her business; she has already started negotiating with the concerned authorities.

At the end of the day, when Nasima and her husband return home, they are able to give their children a proper meal. With a smile she says she is happy that her children do not go to bed hungry.

She expresses her gratitude to LWSIT for helping women like her to lead a life of dignity.