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COVER STORY

Our customer **Shivamma** from M M hills runs a solar powered flour milling unit in her village, earning livelihoods and contributing to their family's incomes



EDITORIAL

The second wave of COVID-19 pandemic is the defining global health crisis of our time and the greatest challenge we have faced since World War Two. Since its emergence in Asia late last year, the virus has spread to every continent. The pandemic is moving like a wave. Educational institutions are closed. COVID-19 has created social, economic and political crises that will leave deep scars. Every day, people are losing jobs and income, with no way of knowing when normality will return. The pandemic is deepening inequalities, and millions more women and girls now risk losing the ability to plan their families and protect their health. Countries must address the fragilities, inequalities and gaps in social protection that have been so painfully exposed.

The government's crisis response has tried to mitigate damage, with a fiscal stimulus of 20 trillion rupees, almost 10 percent of GDP. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGA) and supply of subsidized food grains have acted as useful buffers keeping unemployment down and ensuring social stability.

We are experiencing a new world altogether. This unexpected and adverse shift in habits and mindset has impacted the economies heavily. Many have taken a bad hit. But in some cases, the results are exponentially positive. Adaptability and creative decision making will play a key role in the sustainability of the enterprises. SELCO is striving hard on a daily basis to cope up with the crisis and continue to achieve its objectives through innovation and sustainable technological interventions.

In this edition of Sunchalana, we have covered stories of real change on ground zero during the second wave of the pandemic. These stories represent SELCO and its commitment to national building during such unprecedented times. We hope the reader will enjoy reading this edition of Sunchalana.

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM, SELCO

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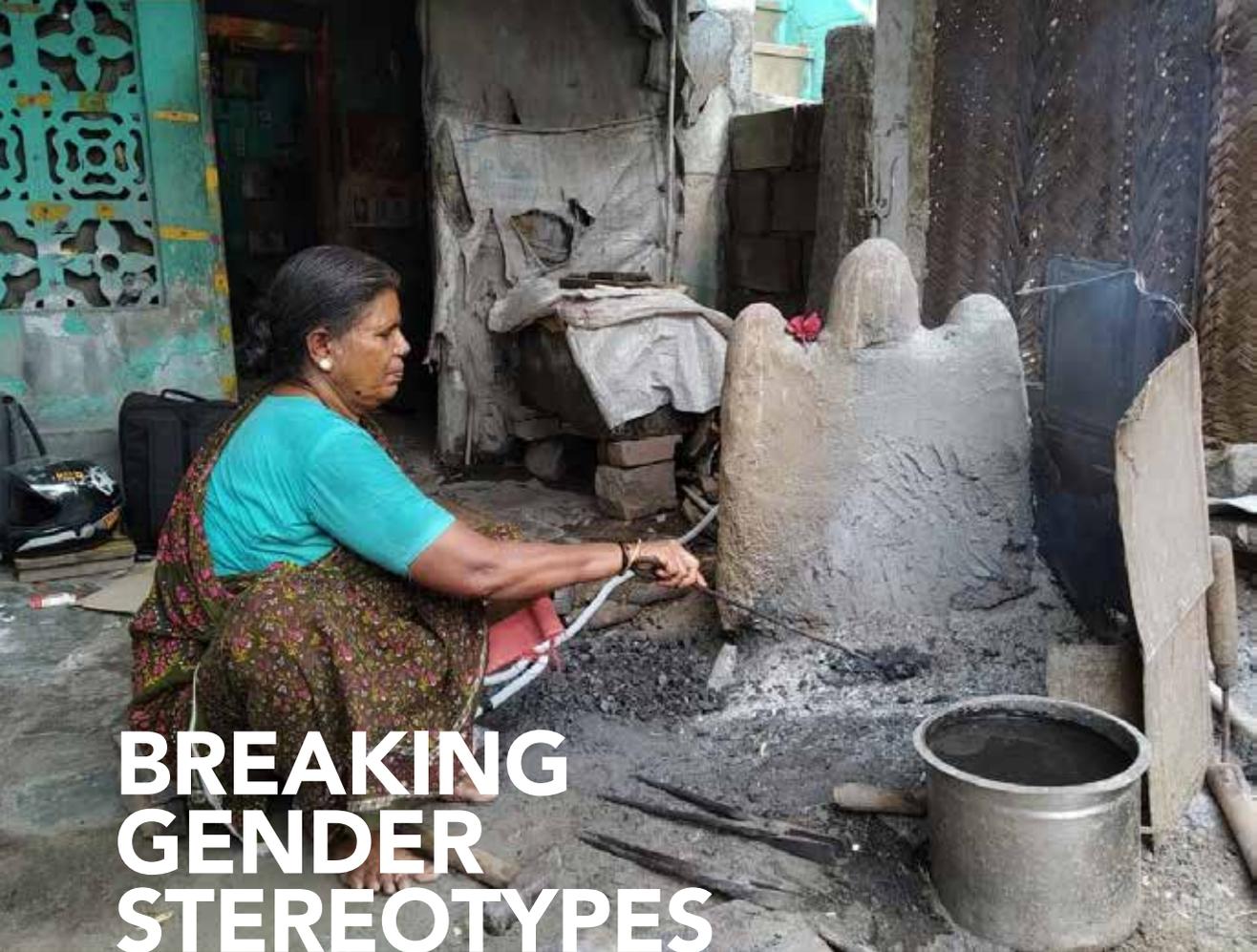
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BREAKING GENDER STEREOTYPES

(Story of Ms. Panjavarnam- 1st women blacksmith of her town)

Blacksmithy is an ancient profession. It roots back to thousands of years, producing a wide range of equipment and tools used in agriculture, construction, household and hardware products. Being a blacksmith is not an easy job, it is very strenuous and requires skill. A lot of physical effort is required and a blacksmith always needs extra human support to complete his work. Physical exertion in the long run results in arthralgia, athetosis, myalgia and respiratory problems too. Also making iron tools requires working long hours in front of the furnace and involves extreme drudgery. Despite the advances in modern mechanization, many blacksmiths still use outmoded methods to deliver their work, while some have graduated

towards mini fabrication units.

Access to energy is often the gap in making that transition from smithing to fabricating. Hence it is considered to be a men's job. Looking at the hazards involved in this profession the next generation definitely will not be interested to take this forward. Solar power efficient blowers are designed to reduce the drudgery and increase productivity which also results in a clean environment. The intervention is designed in such a way that even women can do this work with no support and this might also inspire the next generation to carry forward the skill.

In most traditional livelihoods, women always tend to perform the most drudgery-

prone tasks, such as kneading clay in potter communities; cleaning, destoning, and sifting paddy within farming communities; and fanning fire to keep it alight in a blacksmith's workspace. Appropriate technologies such as blunger/pugmill, rice mills, and blacksmith blowers/power hammers can help reduce the day-to-day physical stress, reduce health risks, and allow women to carry out other tasks as well.

Ms. Panjavarnam from Thirupachethi district in Tamil Nadu was engaged in the task of fanning the fire in her husband's blacksmith workspace, while he would hammer and shape the tools. They belong to a traditional blacksmith community, where the tasks performed have been passed through generations, including the gender roles.



Geographically Thirupachethi is famous for billhooks. And SELCO had successfully installed 5 blower systems during the covid lock down in that area. SELCO's representative had also approached Panjavarnam's family to install the blower, but as their financial condition was very bad during lockdown they did not show any interest. But when the lockdown was released Panjavarnam's husband approached SELCO to install the solar powered blower.

Due to their poor financial condition Panjavarnam couldn't afford the system. GLOW supported them with financial assistance (Go Light Our World - GLOW) is an organization which is solely working on bringing in the green energy usage in unsorted communities of Africa and Asia). Panjavarnam also borrowed some money from her neighbours. Panjavarnam and her husband invested in the blacksmith blower, a simple tool powered by solar energy.

This eliminated the need for constantly fanning the fire through the day. After the intervention, Panjavarnam is now also engaged in crafting the tools herself, which she would never have had the opportunity before and became the first women blacksmith of her town. This has

given her husband time to engage in the sale of their tools, which has helped increase their income with access to additional markets. They also paid back the debt within 28 days of installing the solar powered blacksmith blower. Now even her 2 sons who have no interest in blacksmith jobs have started involving themselves in this profession.

The solar powered solution has eliminated the age old gender stereotype of the blacksmithing profession and considering Panjavarnam more ladies will come into this profession. The new generation which has lost interest in this age-old profession gained interest due to the solar powered solution since it made the job easy, hence this profession would be carried forward to the next generations too. The solar powered solutions have increased the production with lesser human resources. Panjavarnam can perform the task by herself without any help.



developing a network of service personnel and is long known for providing a good servicing facility, be it within warranty period or post warranty.

Customer Service Departments: Apart from providing varied solutions and customised design, SELCO is also known

HOW IS SELCO DIFFERENT?

SELCO sees a customer not just as a customer but a relationship which needs the topping essence called servicing of the sold systems.



(After sales service of SELCO)

The very concept of after sales service means that an organisation values its customer and their relation. While sales is an important factor driving the major revenue of an organisation, after sales service is a factor which majorly retains the customer with the company. The State of Global Customer Services 2017 Report by Microsoft states that 68% of customers have a very favourable view about organisations that offer or contact them with proactive customer service notifications. Service catering in urban regions is easy but servicing in rural areas is a challenge where there is no proper last mile connectivity.

SELCO sees a customer not just as a customer but a relationship which needs the topping essence called servicing of the sold systems. Realising the vitality of after sales service, SELCO has worked extensively in

for providing reliable service to its end users. An extensive network of service technicians was developed decades ago through forming Customer Service Departments. Late in 2016, SELCO decided to begin exclusive service branches across the state to ensure all the customers are attended to and the systems are serviced in time. SELCO has 10 service branches across Karnataka, Bihar, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu.

It was in 2020 that the idea of Seva Bandhu emerged and has evolved since then. It is a unique initiative of creating opportunities for the rural youth and women. The initiative is an effective tool for servicing the energy interventions and also ensures sustained income possibility, leading to empowerment of the individuals and their families.

The Seva Bandhu is given training with preference given to women to enroll as a Seva Bandhu. It works on a commission based model where the Seva Bandhu earns an additional income, resulting in local

employment creation, skill development, income stability and sustainability. This provides an earning opportunity ranging from ₹10,000/- to ₹22,000/- a month.

SELCO offers an annual maintenance Contract (AMC) with its customers wherein 2 scheduled free services per year is provided along with 1 free complaint call. Scheduled services list is maintained by each branch and the technicians follow a routine checkup and servicing at the right time. The human element which stands apart from all organisations is that SELCO personnel maintain a sustained relation with the customers. They visit the customers when they are nearby and check the working of the system. This is apart from the regular maintenance calls. SELCO personnel are available at a call distance at any point in time. The Customer Service Department keeps a tab of the servicing and calls the customers to get their feedback and work on constant improvement of service delivery. Service personnel provide basic system usage training to all its customers and also equip them with basic troubleshooting methods.



Solar powered Covid Hospital built in 20days

SELCO Foundation partnering with Doctors for You (DFY), Karnataka Power Corporation Ltd. (KPCL) and Boeing India have set up a 100 oxygenated bed facility at KPCL, Yelahanka campus in Bengaluru.

The facility will treat mild-to-moderate Covid-19 cases and support existing hospitals in the region.

Inaugurating the facility on 17th May, 2021, Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa said, "It is commendable that industries and NGOs have collaborated with the government in our fight against the Covid battle." He thanked Boeing, SELCO Foundation and Doctors for You (DFY) for the facility on KPCL land.

SELCO Foundation has funded along with Boeing India to build the facility, while Doctors for You to provide the necessary staff and care, SELCO Foundation provided the prefabricated units for the facility. KPCL provided the land necessary to set up the hospital.



Built in 21 days

The hospital was built in less than 21 days. Of the 100-oxygen beds, 10-beds are dedicated for ICU services and 20-beds for High Dependency Units (HDU) ward. The hospital also has areas for triage, donning and doffing, pharmacy, laboratory, rest areas, nurse stations and meeting rooms for medical staff.

"This hospital brings in all concepts of sustainability and has proved that sustainable energies like solar can play a critical role during such pandemics. It not only decentralises the services, but also democratises them," said Dr Harish Hande, Founder – SELCO.

The DFY team will comprise specialist and generalist doctors, paramedics, and facility management staff.



Inspiring story of Janakamma

The thirthahalli taluk of Shimoga district is the highest rainfall area in the state. This a place surrounded by dense jungle. There is a village called Hosakoppa with about 50 houses in this taluk. Agriculture is the mainstay of the village along with dairy.

5-6 km from the village There is a milk cooperative in the distant Hathaigal, run entirely by women. Farmers from the surrounding 19 villages get their milk here.

Lot of people there did not know about solar powered milking machines. A woman of this village got to know about the solar powered milking machine and is happily earring with it. Here is the inspiring story of Janakamma.

Janakamma

Janakamma shifted to her native after her husband passed away. She wanted a job to lead her life and she chose dairy farming. She has been depending on dairy farming for many years now.

She has 4 cows and daily she milks almost 12 liters of milk, by the time she milks she

would get a lot of body pain and is not able to do any other work. Apart from this if she goes anywhere she has to be back before sunsets because there was no regular electricity and she had to depend on a kerosene lamp for milking but her body pain would never reduce.

Irregular electricity was another major problem. Due to which she would never reach the milk cooperative on time.

Through one of the SKDRDP – Shri Kshetra Dharmasthala Rural Development projects she got to know about Solar milking machines. She wanted to install it and had approached two or three banks but they refused to lend loans. Later Hathigal Abhayam Multipurpose Co-operative Society agreed to lend the loan.

Now after the installation of solar powered milking machines and solar powered lights Janakamma says that now there is no physical pain and need not worry about coming home early. Moreover she need not depend on electricity and can milk anytime. Now she also feels that she should buy two more cows.



Solar Light illuminates a students family at Udupi

2 students of the same family from Uppunda village of Kundapur were finding it difficult to study at home as they did not have an electric connection. Gulabi Poojary the mother of both the children tried hard to get electricity connected to their house but failed miserably as they did not have any proper documents to submit.

Gublabi and her husband are daily wage labour and their only dream is to get a good education for their children. Their children were studying with help of candles and kerosine lamp which was very strainfull.

Realizing the problem faced by Gulabi and her family. SELCO solar decided to provide a free solar lighting system to the family and now the installation process is also completed.

The family is very happy and thankful



about the light provided to them.

Gulabhi while talking to the SELCO executive said, “ We shifted to this house 8 months ago and did not have an electricity connection. I have two daughters, the elder one is studying in SSLC and the younger one is studying in 7th std. It was really difficult for them to study at night and they had to depend on kerosine lamps or candles. We tried hard to get electricity but we failed. I feel finally god showed some mercy on us hence and I am really thankful to SELCO solar who provided us with a solar lighting system. “

Covid Resilient Stories

Due to the ongoing pandemic, India's unemployment rate has skyrocketed to a staggering 27.1% since the beginning of the lockdown last year. An estimated 12.2 crore people have lost their jobs due to the Covid-19 pandemic in India. But there are few champions who adopted solar based livelihood solutions and earned a steady income thus supporting their families during such difficult times.



Mrs. Rukmini

Mrs. Rukmini earns her livelihood from solar powered sewing machines. She has considerably improved her monthly income. She trusted the technology, and used it efficiently and set a great example of leading a sustainable, environmentally responsible life.

Her husband was a daily wage labour and has lost job during covid, but she says that they don't face much of financial crisis as she would get tailoring work from her neighbors and also from SIRI products. She is happy and proud that she is looking after her family during this lockdown.



Ravish

Ravish, an IT employee moved from Bangalore to his village in Koppa. Having lost his job due to covid, he started a small mobile shop as there were no mobile shops nearby. He realised that around 3km to 4km, there is a photocopy machine in his village. Therefore he installed a solar powered photocopy machine.

He is happy with the income. According to him he is happier to be in the village, because he is now able to earn and save some decent amount of money even during the lockdown period.



Shivamma

Shivamma runs a solar powered flour milling unit in her village, earning livelihoods and contributing to their family's incomes. It also helps her neighbouring households who do not have to travel 50 kms for milling. Shivamma's husband - a migrant laborer lost his job during COVID19. But with Shivamma's solar powered flour milling unit, their income has been thriving. Not only is she able to run the household but has also completed her loan for the machine.



How Solar Energy helped to survive the art form



Before



After

Pottery is one of the oldest traditional livelihoods in India which is an art form but also can be used to create functional items. The craft has been passed on over the generations with evolution.

Ramachandra Gunaga, a potter by profession and a Yakshagana artist by skills hails from Halkar Village of Kumta Taluk in Karnataka. He is 68 years old. His ancestors were also potters. He lost his eyesight 30 years ago and he has been doing pottery since 20 years. Productivity was low as he was doing pots, dishes, mugs, vases using a manual heavy wheel with the help of his wife. Manual wheel has to be rotated continuously, which takes a lot of time and physical effort. It was very difficult for him to do all other jobs like mixing and kneading the clay, Finally burning them into a kiln.

“The Solar powered pottery wheel system has not just kept me away from a few hazards but also has increased the efficiency of the work there by helping us to earn more.

▪ **RAMACHANDRA GUNAGA**

He opted for a Solar powered pottery wheel with customized speed controller for easy operations with the support of SELCO Foundation and SKDRDP.

His wife also finds the work easy now. His son is also interested because of the ease of work and smart way of approach.

He used to earn Rs 200-300 per month Now with the help of Solar powered pottery wheel he is able to earn Rs 5,000-6,000 per month.

Experience sharing from members of the SELCO family

SELCO for me is like a blessing. I am an introverted person and was afraid to go out for work. I have heard a lot of problems that women would face during their work life, which made me much weaker.

I am very proud that I am also a member of the SELCO family because this is the only organization I witness where women are respected and treated as equal as men. Lot of people just talk about women empowerment but SELCO already is making rural women empowered and independent. I had a lot of desire to serve the society and I think I have fulfilled it through SELCO; starting from providing light to un electrified houses to providing livelihood opportunities for rural people. SELCO strongly believes that women are not just meant for cooking but can come out of their houses and work equally as men. It's not only helping the society but is also providing employment opportunities to a lot of unemployed women like me.

Jyothi Chakratborthy
*Office Administrator
SELCO Kalburgi branch*

