



Candidate Nomination

2019 Stop Hunger Women Awards

Application to be submitted to WomenStopHunger@stop-hunger.org
by August 31, 2018

Who is the candidate for the initiative?

First name(s) and FAMILY NAME(s): **Bisto Bai Meravi**

Address: Pantripatra, Garratola P.O. BirsaTahsil, Balaghat Dist. Madhya Pradesh, Pin: 481051, India

Phone: 9424336266

Email: gscgtola4@gmail.com

Organization/Association: Good Shepherd Sisters, Garratola

Website: Refer page-9

Social Media: ---

Other publications on the web: Refer page - 9

Role of the candidate within the Organization/Association: President of Multi-purpose Women Co-operative Society.

What is the origin of the Organization/Association?

WHY and WHEN was this Organization/Association created?

Good Shepherd sisters, Garratola, Birsa Block, Balaghat District of Madhya Pradesh, was started 35 years ago to work towards holistic development of tribal women. Garratola is one of the villages of Birsa Block, which has 171 villages. We are working with tribal namely Gonds, Oroans, and Baigas who live in primitive conditions isolated from the mainstream. Over the years we have been concentrating on Health Care, Awareness Building, and Supportive Education Centres for School-going Children, Supplementary Nutrition, Formation of Various Groups, Livelihood Intervention, Grihini (Home Science) Training, Income Generating Programs, Seed Banks and Watershed Program.

What is the initiative?

WHY? Why was this initiative launched? What is its origin? Date?

The families in the remote forest areas of Balaghat District, Madhya Pradesh have few income generating opportunities and climate change has seen crop yields decline in the last few years. The effect of climate change has also resulted in a negative impact of natural forest resources as people increasing exploit these resources in order to cover shortfalls in family income. Those most affected by



Women Stop Hunger Awards

lowering family income are women who aspire to move away from an agrarian lifestyle with its reducing returns and move towards enterprise development with long term potential and sufficient returns.

Considering the situation, the Good Shepherd Sisters of Garratola commenced the **Economic Justice Project** in October 2015.

WHAT? What is the initiative exactly? Describe it in detail (including quantified indicators)

This project applies a results based approach, incorporating advocacy and political participation, into skills training and business development activities that addressed to 150 women and 60 men over 3 years.

The income generation activities of the project are goat rearing, pig rearing, fish farming and petty-shops.

HOW? How did you set up your initiative, what were the challenges and difficulties that you faced (or still are facing)?

- Beneficiaries excluded from mainstream society
- Lack of knowledge in politics
- Superstitious beliefs
- Unavailability of communication service providers (no phone signal and internet service)
- Indifference of duty bearers
- Public perception of the possibility of evangelization
- Non co-operation of government officials
- Outbreak of contagious diseases (affecting the animals / fish)
- Lack of attention from the media in publishing news on our program
- Limited availability of grazing land during the summer
- Erratic weather conditions and climate change issues
- Exploitation from middle men
- Non-availability of medicines / vaccination for animals
- Anti -NGO attitude by present government

BY WHO AND FOR WHO? Which people are involved with you in this initiative and how many are there? Which people benefit from the initiative and who are they?

The tribal people belong to socially and economically backward community. They have been exploited by the higher caste people. They are considered to be 'voiceless' community. The participation in the political engagement is utter poor. Though there are State and Central Govt. Schemes available for them but in reality most of these remain only in the paper. In contrast, the tribal people are deprived of any kind of development.



Women Stop Hunger Awards

The BirsaBlock suffers from all significant features of backwardness. The negligence from both central and state government on development for the tribal community is quite vivid. After the inception of the Good Shepherd Sisters' community development programs, there is a general agreement amongst tribal community on the need to address problems arising from poverty, income inequality and disparities in access to services amongst the population.

However, the area is blessed with abundant forest where all favorable conditions exist for animal husbandry and fish farming. Considering this, The Economic justice project titled "*Empowerment of Vulnerable Women through Human Rights & Economic Development in India*" commenced on Oct. 2015 at Garratola site with an aim to contribute to the economic, social and political empowerment of Tribal women in and around Birsa Block area. The four aspects of the project are: Reduce gender discrimination; Sustainability in income through access to financial and productive resources for business start-up; increase self-esteem and social empowerment. A total 150 tribal women are being supported towards diverse business activities; 124 women are being supported towards goat rearing, 18 for pig rearing, 6 fish farming and remaining 2 for petty-shops.

SUPPORTS? If the initiative and / or your organization/association is already supported, please indicate by whom (NGO, Foundations, organizations, companies ...) and how.

The economic justice project is supported mainly by Mísean Cara (Ireland) and co-funded by Oak Foundation, USA

TODAY: What is the current impact of the initiative? What progress has been achieved through it? (Impact and progress in a broad sense: economic, ecological, social, human ...)

The Economic Justice Fish Farming project which initiated in the Birsa block covering 25 villages/tolas was boon for the tribal. First and foremost the unorganized tribal women were organized under the SHGs. 13 SHGs groups were formed with ten members each. Apart from the 150 direct beneficiaries, the projects also have indirect beneficiaries. Though the direct groups only received the financial inputs all other general training and awareness programs were incorporated for the indirect groups.

Earlier, the tribal women's participation in local decision making body meeting i.e, Gram Sabha was very poor. They were not aware of the various government schemes available for them. The project trained and educated them on human and labour rights and eventually the tribal women themselves advocated for their rights before the local power holders and finally tribal women could avail themselves of various government schemes. The participation in the Gram Sabha and political engagement of the women is now far better than earlier.

The 150 women of the project have been financially supported to venture in the fish farming business. The support enabled them to access to financial and productive resources for business development. The project's technical expert's guidance and other support system enabled them to succeed in the business field.



Women Stop Hunger Awards

To empower tribal women socially as well as economically is a challenging work. Still, the project could effectively introduce the women empowerment programs through the various support systems. The project established relevant services providers for legal aid, medical referral, technical guidance for the business, police for the protection etc. The life skills and leadership training programs helped the women to enhance their knowledge and public skills. They developed better communication skills, confidence. The women are convinced enough to articulate their power, and freely interact with the power holders to get their rights.

The group dynamic activities, capacity building programs, awareness programs on women rights, human rights helped women to enhance their self-esteem and self-confidence. Tribal women engaged in the project report a vivid change in their life. Their self-esteem and self-confidence are shifted from low to higher level. Now these tribal women are able to take informed and independent decisions on their personal life (access to education and work, choices regarding reproduction) as well as decide on family matters (budget, education of children, healthcare)

KEY FIGURES: Indicate the key figures for your initiative, or refer to them, if you have already mentioned them in the application

The Economic Justice Project intervention has been swiftly sailing towards excellence for its beneficiary with the support of Misesan Cara & OAK Foundation. The project acts as facilitator in the midst of the underprivileged, oppressed, voiceless and demoralised people who are living in the most backward and underdeveloped villages at Birsa Block. The target villages face severe scarcity of livelihood opportunities. To make them self-reliant and self-governing, the project plays a vital role to bring premeditated changes among them.

From October 2015 onwards the project has been addressing various issues through Self Help Groups (SHGs) and with the support of local NGOs and Government Institutions, especially in the areas of education, health, community organization and livelihood interventions. It is being pursued with high-speed and their committed participation and involvement are really reflected in the quality and extent of the programmes.

The Economic Justice project has set a unique significance among the tribal community, especially on the livelihood opportunities. The project interventions could prove how tribal women, though poor and underprivileged, can become an active partaker in the development activities of the village through economic justice concept and create a good environment for the women in the family and at community level.

Over the period of 3 years, 336 Information Meetings have been organised for the women. Through such meetings the women became aware of legal and labour rights and got educated on entitlements



Women Stop Hunger Awards

under government schemes for which they are eligible and how to claim these rights. They were also sensitised on reproductive health issues, insurance (humans and animals), fodder, fertiliser and land rights etc. As a result of the initiatives taken by the Economic Justice project 125 women could access the government schemes and claim their entitlements. Some of the schemes are: construction of Toilets under *Swatch Bharat Abhiyan*, construction of new Ponds under *Belram Thalab Yojna*, construction of new Wells under *Kapil Dhara Yojna*, house construction under *Mukya Mantri Aawas Yojna*, Farm-bund under *Watershed scheme*, subsidized seeds from Agriculture Department and support from the local Health Department. 27 Gender Sensitization initiatives have been conducted at community level regarding the value of women and girls in order to increase women's participation in local decision-making process. 115 women could participate in the Gram Sabha Meetings which helped them to raise their voices and eventually get appropriate Government schemes.

Partnership has been established with other NGOs for joint initiatives in support of actions on elimination of discrimination against women and implementation of government schemes at local and district level through joint forums. 25 meetings were organized with the power holders in which 73 women spoke to advocate their rights. These meeting helped the women to interact with the Duty-bearers (political leaders) and government officials. 40 Duty-bearers attended women development related events and made statements against women discrimination. 141 hours of training have been offered to women on enterprise development (market research, business plan development, budgeting and book keeping), peer to peer market networking groups set up to provide on-going business support.

The project also helped the members of SHGs to improve their numeracy and literacy skills during the SHG meetings. 155 hours of technical skills training were provided to the beneficiaries of fish farming, goat and pig rearing. The technical training helped the beneficiaries of fish farming to learn how to prepare the pond for the coming season. The beneficiaries of goat/pig rearing learnt the low cost method of construction of shed for animals can be done.

33 women out of the income earned from their respective economic activity could set up new micro business like petty shop, vegetable vending, poultry, and brick making that will help them to diversify their source of income. 13 SHGs groups started to sell their products even to the distant big markets where they get higher price. Training on Life Skills was provided to the target women. The training helped them to enhance their communication/public speaking skills and self-confidence.

During the project period the all 141 women were able to access the counselling services from the project. The project Counsellor made regular house visits and interacted with the women and their family members on stressful life, alcoholism, difficulty with in-laws etc. These visits helped the beneficiaries to get ample support from their families. 35 young women were referred to service providers like medical colleges, district hospitals and local Public Health Centres etc.



Women Stop Hunger Awards

The women were trained on leadership skills to motivate them to enhance their participation and leadership in the local administration. As a result many women are taking part in the Gram Sabha meetings. Recently one woman beneficiary has become the Ward Member. 13 Men Support Groups (the husbands of the women beneficiaries) have been formed with 150 members. The project conducts separate meetings and training programs for these men. They support the women in their economic activities. They involve the women in the decision making process in such matters related to children's education, their career, their marriage, and construction of house etc.

Before the project implementation most of the women had very low self-esteem. Over the period of 3 years 76 percent of the women have increased self-esteem. At the start of the project the average monthly income of the women was INR 1000 to 1500. Now the average monthly income is INR 3500. It is gradually increasing.

TOMORROW: what are the next steps planned for this initiative and your development projects? What is the projected impact?

A Co-operative Society named **Dindayal Antyodoy Mahila Bahu Uddeshhiya Sahakari Samiti**(Development of Women Multi-purpose Co-operative Society) has been formed with 150 women. Its registration is under process. The proposed candidate Bisto Bai Meravi is the President of this Society. 150 women currently implementing various economic activities will come together under a single Co-operative Society and will work as a one unit which will be led by the elected women from the SHGs.

The Co-operative Society will arrange short term credit for its members in order to help them to improve their business. It will also arrange supply of hybrid goats, fish seedlings, fertilizers, implements etc. It will help the members to improve their business activities and market their goods (fish, goats and pigs etc.) and get proper price for their products/goods. This Society will help the members to set up multiple micro-enterprises so that they can diversify their income and improve their overall economic condition and standard of living.

The Co-operative Society will make arrangements for health, education and recreation for their members. It will also encourage the members to save a part of their income for their future needs. From these savings the members may avail loan when needed. This will help the women not to approach money-lenders who exploit the rural people with exorbitant interest.

In short, the Organization believes that an efficient and independent Women Co-operative Society can perform diligently and lead the tribal community towards sustainable development.



Intent to spend allocated funds

In case you are nominated, which project(s) would you fund thanks to the Stop Hunger Grant?

In case the nominated candidate is selected and given the Stop Hunger Grant, then, the fund will be reinvested to strengthen the Women Multi-purpose Co-operative Society. The individual enterprises also will be enhanced under the umbrella of this Co-operative Society with an objective of increasing the number of women entrepreneurs in the tribal community.

Is this candidate nominated by someone else? If yes, complete this section

First name(s) and FAMILY NAME(s) of the nominator:

Address:

Phone:

E-mail:

Organization/Association of the nominator:

Relationship of the nominator with the Organization/Association:

Why do you think the candidate should be considered a role model in her community?

Born in the village of Pantripatra, quite far from Balaghat district of Madhya Pradesh, Bisto Bai Meravi, aged 32, seemed to have all the cards stacked against her. She belongs to a tribal community known as **Gond**. It is considered a low caste community, oppressed and exploited by higher caste communities over the centuries. This community people were pushed away from the mainstream of life and they resided adjacent to forest areas where modern developments are far from their reach. As a child, her family could not pay for her education, at the age of 17 she was married off to a young man of 20. Being a jobless person, her husband would go different cities, spending great part of time searching for job in the unorganized sector and get meager income for the family. He would often get distressed which would result in typical rural family problems.

But Bisto Bai, very soon with two children, realized that she could provide her children their needs as well as meet the household needs by herself. For this she started crafting fans and brooms to earn a few extra rupees. It was in October 2015, when the Good Shepherd Sisters initiated the Economic Justice Project in Garratola, she joined a Self Help Group (SHG). Soon she began to realize her full potential. However, in her community, a woman leaving her family to attend outdoor/out-of-village meetings was not encouraged. Bisto Bai had to go through this struggle. Despite certain obstacles, she persisted as she considered it a modest cost to assure a brighter future for herself, her family and her community. She started saving, and then attending various workshops and training programs organized by the Good Shepherd Sisters, under the Economic Justice project. Through these training programs



Women Stop Hunger Awards

and workshops, she became greatly empowered. She started mobilizing the women of her community about their rights, capacities, health, and education and worked on their socio-economic, cultural and political empowerment. The journey started and she never looked back. She became the President of **Dindoyal Antyoday Mahila Bahu Uddeshiya Sahakari Samiti** (Development of Women Multi-purpose Co-operative Society) with a view to take it forward.

A self-sufficient goat-rearing woman, who has achieved a sustainable source of livelihood in one of the remote villages in the State of Madhya Pradesh, Bisto Bai has worked efficiently with her husband, and has successfully transitioned her farm to a low-cost model goat rearing farm within a short span of time. Bisto Bai's thriving goat farm has ensured that her family has sufficient to eat throughout the year and she has gained the respect of the other women who do goat-rearing. The villagers and other co-beneficiaries consider her as a role model and they are inspired by her humane personality.

Bisto Bai was a typical tribal woman in her community spending most of the time with her family doing the household chores. When she found an opening to work for a common cause through the Economic Justice project implemented by the Good Shepherd Sisters, she responded very positively. After making an entry into the project she realized her inherent talents and abilities. She made a commitment to work for a common cause. She did not turn back afterwards. While being one of the beneficiaries of the goat rearing program; she became also a center and a role model for the rest of the goat rearing women. Being the President of the SHG, she always encouraged all the members to take part in various activities undertaken by the SHG. Thanks to her leadership, the other members of the SHG learnt about the government schemes available for them, acquired knowledge on human rights and women's rights.

Being a *Ward Member*, she became their mouthpiece in the local Gram Sabha. Due to her lobbying various government schemes have been implemented in her village like new and improved houses, toilets, a public well, watershed activities, improved roads, access to pensions for the elderly and getting Ration Card and Aadhar Card etc..

Such developments completely altered her status in her community. Instead of being a scorned untouchable, she acquired a dignified position and people started admiring her and calling upon her in times of crisis. Slowly but steadily, the financial situation of her family improved. Her children are receiving higher education and the family has its own house. Bisto Bai is now a key figure in the social, political, cultural and economic development of the women of her village community. Where people once made snide and derogatory comments about her, they now respect her as a role model.

Last but not least, Bisto Bai is a firm believer in the education of the girl child. According to her a woman, who is aware of her capacities, can work wonders. Coming from a community of lower caste, she makes sure that no woman in her neighborhood or community remains unheard. It is not only the



beneficiary women of the Economic Justice project, but also the tribal community (which she belongs to) hopes for a better future under the leadership of Bisto Bai.

Photos, videos and other documents

Photos: attach photos of the candidate and photos representative of the initiative.

Videos: If videos are available, provide the links to access them.

Other documents: you can include up to 5 pages of supporting document.

(1) Photo Gallery of the candidate is attached.

(2) Short Video titled *Towards Empowerment*. The url link is: https://youtu.be/X3E-qCfY_X4

This video film contains sharing or testimony by some Women Beneficiaries and Men Support group members under the Economic Justice project. Bisto Bai, the nominated candidate, is one of them. Though the sharing part is in vernacular, the sub-titles are in English.

(3) Documentary film titled *Mahila* (on the women empowerment) presented similar stories of other empowered women participating in the same project in a different Indian village. The links are given below:

Website: www.mahilafilm.com, or Direct url link: <http://bit.ly/Mahila-Film>



ENGAGEMENT LETTER

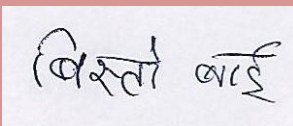
I, undersigned **Bisto BaiMeravi**, representing the association / organization **Good Shepherd Sisters, Garratola** commit myself, in the case I am a winner of the Stop Hunger Women 2019 Awards to dedicate the funds allocated by Stop Hunger to the initiative presented in support of this application.

I pledge to participate in the Stop Hunger Donors' Night which will take place in Paris on March 12th, 2019.

I also undertake to inform Stop Hunger regularly (at least 2 times / year) of the progress of the initiative, and to provide reports accompanied by photos.

I declare on the honor of the regularity of the tax and social situation of the association / organization that I represent; the accuracy of the information given in this application form and the attached documents.

Done at Garratola on the 31st day of August 2018

Signature: 
(BISTO BAI)

Note on the name: In the tribal community the parents give a name to their child during the naming ceremony. That is the original name. Each tribal family has a family/community name which will be added to the original name. In case of a girl child, after her marriage, she will be called "Bai". So the candidate's original name is BISTO. Her family name is MERAVI. Since she is married she is known as BISTO BAI MERAVI. But while signing, she signs as BISTO BAI (leaving out the family name). This is the case with other women too.