



HUES OF CHANGE

A STITCH IN TIME

Dr Reddy's and Hindustan Unilever help people earn a living with dignity.

Nandita Datta and Karthik Krishnan

ASHOK KUMAR SALAM, a school drop-out, was forced to work with his father on their small farm in Kartala village in the Korba district of Chhattisgarh until a chance visit to the gram panchayat office led him to a sustainable livelihood initiative run by Dr Reddy's Foundation. He learnt the basics of automobile repair, improved his communication skills and also landed a job with a dealer of Yamaha Motors not far from home at a starting salary of ₹3,000.

HEENA RANA, a young widow with two children living at the mercy of her relatives in the small hamlet of Miyagam in the Vadodara district of Gujarat, too, has been able to transform her life thanks

to the Dr Reddy's Foundation-run livelihood initiative. Today, she's a staff nurse at Vadodara General Hospital earning enough to support her family and take care of her aging parents.

HUL SAMRUDDHI

OBJECTIVE	To impart livelihood education to youth in Silvassa in three years.
SCALE	72 villages in Silvassa covered.
LOCATIONS	Silvassa.
ACHIEVEMENT	1,068 tribals have been positively impacted.

VIBHA JHA, 28, and her husband eked out a living on ₹4,000 per month in Amla village of Silvassa. Then, she enrolled in HUL's learning centre for stitching and embroidery. Three months down the line, she bought a sewing machine with a ₹8,000-loan to set up a tailoring shop. Now, the family income is ₹8,000 and Jha accounts for half the earnings of the family.

TALIB SWARNIL of Silvassa had been in the textile business but competition made the going tough. He enrolled in HUL's Samruddhi learning project and learnt the intricacies of the tailoring business for three months. Now, he has his own store, employs five people and takes home ₹70,000.

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS: HUL helps the community members get jobs too.

Salam, Rana, Jha and Swarnil's journeys to financial independence are just four success stories of HUL and Dr Reddy's projects catering to people all over India. Dr Reddy's Livelihood Advancement Business School (LABS), launched by Dr Reddy's Foundation in 1999, has impacted the lives of about 250,000 people across India. LABS is a three-to-four month, free training programme aimed at improving youths' employability. Hindustan Unilever's Samruddhi project is more focused, specifically on Silvassa. Three years ago, HUL tied up with Aide et Action (AeA), an NGO, to give tribals a chance at a better living. It offers training in tailoring, screen printing and animal husbandry. The project has, so far, trained 1,068 tribals.

making, goal setting, gender issues and time/money management. There's also a spoken English module as well as a course on work readiness (i.e. how to prepare a biodata or face an interview, coping with work-related problems, etc).

But before training can commence, there's a lot of groundwork that the lo-

DR REDDY'S FOUNDATION

OBJECTIVE	Providing sustainable livelihood to economically disadvantaged youth.
SCALE	Trained nearly 250,000 people.
LOCATIONS	132 centres spread across India.
ACHIEVEMENT	75-80% placement for people trained at LABS.



BUILDING LIVES: LABS centres offer technical training in 21 disciplines.

PERFECT LAB RESULTS

At the 132 LABS centres, technical training is offered in 21 disciplines that can range from customer relations to patient assistance, hospitality, teacher training, white goods and automobile repair, BPO, security services, etc. It includes theory classes, project assignments, field visits and on-the-job training. The curriculum is designed with industry professionals so it is relevant. Apart from technical training, candidates (they are called aspirants) are taught life skills such as inter-personal communication, team building, decision-

cal LABS has to cover. Along with local bodies, both government and non-government, it must survey the area to map its employability potential based on the local economy, culture and labour market. This will determine the courses that will eventually be offered. "We screen people based on their economic background and commitment levels as well as family support," says Jitendra Kalra, CEO of the Dr Reddy's Foundation.

The attention to detail has raised interest in the programme. "Our placements have been going up every year. We are

now able to place as many as 75-80% of the aspirants," says Kalra. The foundation is, for example, currently working with Accenture and IT industry body Nasscom to update the BPO curriculum and train the trainers. It has also tied up with the Tata group for knowledge support and network expansion.

And the candidates aren't complaining. Both Salam and Rana are thrilled with LABS. "It's a great programme. Apart from giving me technical skills, it has instilled self-belief," says Salam. Rana says the LABS experience has taught her to think positive. "You must work for a better future with a positive mindset," she says.

PROSPERITY FOR ALL

HUL's Samruddhi project has set up training centres in Amla and in neighbouring areas like Khanvel in Silvassa and Vapi, Gujarat. The learning centre in Amla has helped tribals, like Jha, earn a decent living in Silvassa, an industrial hub for companies seeking generous tax holidays, about 183 km from Mumbai. The aim of the project is to impart livelihood education to 1,080 youths in the 72 villages of Silvassa in three years. The project timeline was from August 1, 2008 to September 30, 2011, and it is already well on its way to meeting the deadline.

With the help of its NGO partner AeA, HUL hires a building in each of these villages and ropes in local help. Namita Surender Maharana, who is a tailoring faculty, says, "I am from around here and I am glad I didn't have to go out of Amla to make my living."

Realising that training alone won't suffice, HUL also helps raise awareness of benefits. For people who are below the poverty line, banks offer a subsidy. One of Jha's friends didn't know that she was eligible but HUL helped her take a loan.

The NGO also helps students find jobs. "We write their CV so that they can apply for jobs," says Jaydeep Kardam, Centre Manager, AeA. Word of mouth and good references help them get jobs in textile mills and other factories in Silvassa.

Dr Reddy's and HUL have proved that focused efforts can bring about marked changes in livelihood patterns across the country.

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