



# JEEVIKA NEWSLETTER

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## The Unfolding Revolution : How Bihar's Mahila Samvaad is Amplifying Women's Voice and Shaping the Future

In a monumental stride towards genuine grassroots empowerment, the Government of Bihar's Mahila Samvaad programs are not merely dialogues; they are a resounding revolution, weaving a tapestry of change across the length and breadth of the state. These programs have transformed into vibrant, dynamic forums where women, emboldened by the tangible benefits of various government schemes, are stepping forward to share their triumphs, articulate their challenges, and, most critically, contribute their invaluable perspectives to the policy-making process. The echo of their collective voice is reshaping the developmental landscape of Bihar.

The sheer scale and consistency of the Mahila Samvaad initiative are unprecedented. For the past 49 consecutive days, without fail, these vital conversations have unfolded daily at an average of 1200 locations across all 38 districts of Bihar. This unwavering commitment to reaching every corner of the state has yielded staggering results. As of today, a remarkable 58555 individual dialogue events have been successfully conducted, signifying a phenomenal logistical and community mobilization effort.



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The participation figures are equally awe-inspiring: an astounding over 1 crore 17 lakh 11 thousand women have actively engaged in these programs. This translates to an average of approximately 2.5 lakh women participating in these crucial events every single day, demonstrating not just widespread reach, but a profound level of engagement and ownership from the women themselves. What truly sets the Mahila Samvaad apart is its dual focus: not only on disseminating information about government schemes but, more importantly, on actively listening and recording the aspirations of the women. During these programs, women are encouraged to openly discuss and prominently raise points related to a wide array of women-centric government initiatives, from educational support to livelihood generation and health.

Crucially, their aspirations, suggestions and concerns are not lost in verbal discourse; they are meticulously and digitally recorded through a dedicated mobile application. This innovative technological integration ensures that every voice is captured and preserved. As on date, over 15 lakh 31 thousand aspirations have been meticulously documented, creating an unparalleled repository of community needs and desires.

The Government of Bihar has established a robust mechanism to act upon these vital inputs. These digitally recorded aspirations are not simply filed away; they are swiftly noted, meticulously categorized department-wise and then promptly forwarded to the respective government departments for immediate attention, resolution, and execution. This systematic approach ensures that the insights gleaned from the Mahila Samvaad directly inform policy adjustments, program modifications, and the initiation of new welfare measures, thereby creating a truly responsive and citizen-centric governance model.

The nature of the aspirations expressed by women during these dialogues provides a fascinating insight into their priorities. While personal needs and individual empowerment remain central, there is a clear and prominent emphasis on broader community development. Women are consistently prioritizing essential community infrastructure development, demanding improvements in public amenities and advocating for enhanced employment opportunities. This collective foresight underscores their understanding of the interconnectedness of individual well-being and community prosperity.

Lead Story : Mahila Samvad 2025



Many women have openly acknowledged and appreciated the significant strides made by government efforts in improving job avenues specifically for women, highlighting the tangible impact of schemes designed to foster economic independence.

The human element of these dialogues is perhaps the most compelling. In events held across the diverse tapestry of Bihar's districts, women have candidly expressed their aspirations, articulated their problems with clarity and offered insightful suggestions. Their testimonies repeatedly confirm that government schemes have played a pivotal and crucial role in making them self-reliant and significantly improving their quality of life. These are not abstract policy discussions; they are real-life stories of transformation.

Consider the powerful testimony of Sarita Kumari from Jaynagar block in Madhubani district. In a recent dialogue, she shared, "With the support received from the Chief Minister Kanya Utthan Yojana, I have been able to send my daughter to college. My elder daughter received computer training and is now working with a private institution." Her voice filled with pride and gratitude, she added that these schemes have not only provided financial assistance but have fundamentally given her the confidence and strength to envision a brighter future and move forward in life with newfound determination.

In Khiroti village of Ghosi block, Jehanabad district, during a dialogue meticulously organized by the Sakshi Jeevika Women's Village Organization, Sunita Devi articulated a pressing community need. She emphasized the urgent requirement for self-employment opportunities within the village. "If the women here are guided properly," she passionately stated, "they can contribute significantly to their family income through activities like tailoring, mushroom cultivation and pickle-making." Her suggestion reflects a deep understanding of local resources and a desire to harness the collective potential of women for economic upliftment.

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Another compelling example comes from Devaraha Panchayat of Narpatganj block, Araria district, where Nazneen Khatoon from the Sukoon Village Organization raised concerns about drainage and sanitation. She highlighted a prevalent issue: “The village roads get waterlogged, causing problems. Proper drainage and soak pit facilities can make our village safer and cleaner.”

Crucially, she underscored the empowering effect of the Mahila Samvaad platform itself, stating, “The Mahila Samvad platform has empowered me to voice such issues openly.” This statement is a testament to the safe and inclusive space these dialogues have created, enabling women to articulate not just personal needs but also community-wide concerns that directly impact their daily lives.

Beyond the collection of aspirations, the Mahila Samvaad programs are also designed to be comprehensive information hubs. Participants receive detailed information about various government schemes through informational leaflets distributed widely. Furthermore, engaging videos related to different schemes are shown, helping women gain a better understanding of the benefits available to them and how to maximize these opportunities. This educational component ensures that women are not only heard but are also fully informed and equipped to access the support they need.

In essence, the Mahila Samvaad is more than just a series of meetings; it is a profound exercise in democratic participation and decentralized planning. Through these programs, women are expressing the needs of their regions with unprecedented clarity and effectiveness. They are no longer passive beneficiaries but active stakeholders, participating actively and meaningfully in the development process.

The Mahila Samvaad is steadily and undeniably emerging as a powerful, indispensable mechanism to bring women's voices, experiences and insights directly into the sphere of policy-making. It is a testament to the Government of Bihar's commitment to building a truly inclusive society where every woman has a voice and every voice contributes to a stronger, more prosperous Bihar.

## JEEVIKA Didi Ki Nursery, Khagaria: A Green Revolution Rooted in Empowerment

### Introduction

Tucked away in the vibrant heart of Khagaria district, Didi Ki Nursery is not just a plantation venture—it is a beacon of ecological awareness and women empowerment. Spearheaded under the JEEVIKA initiative, this unique program is designed to promote environmental and natural conservation while uplifting rural women by creating dignified livelihood opportunities. By enabling women to take the lead in plant nurseries and sapling production, the initiative serves both nature and society. At present, Khagaria is home to 12 operational Didi Ki Nurseries, out of which 8 are supported under MGNREGA and 4 through the Forest Department, all managed in partnership with JEEVIKA. These nurseries have not only helped green the environment but have also sown the seeds of economic independence among rural women.



**Purpose and Establishment of Didi Ki Nursery:** The genesis of Didi Ki Nursery was not merely to grow and sell plants. At its core, it was established to cultivate awareness about the value of trees and sustainable ecosystems. In the early phases, the Didis (SHG women) focussed on sensitizing their communities about the vital role of greenery in maintaining environmental balance and improving quality of life. Trees, they emphasized, do not just purify the air but also radiate positivity, offer shade, conserve soil and regulate the microclimate.

This realization drove the collective vision: to make saplings accessible to the public at reasonable rates while nurturing a new generation of green champions in rural Bihar.

**Empowering Women through Green Enterprise:** One of the most remarkable aspects of Didi Ki Nursery is how it has empowered women to become entrepreneurs and environmental stewards. The Didis were trained extensively in nursery management—learning everything from seed treatment and plant care to sales and record keeping. For many, this was their first exposure to running a micro-enterprise. With hands-on training, these women began managing their nurseries

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independently. Not only did this create a stable source of income for their families, but it also elevated their standing in the community. From being homemakers to being decision-makers, the transformation has been deeply empowering.

**Environmental Impact and Public Awareness:** Didi Ki Nursery has made a tangible contribution to ecological restoration. The nurseries supply thousands of saplings each year, which are then distributed for plantation drives, community landscaping, and afforestation efforts. Through school programs, village meetings, and awareness campaigns, the Didis promote tree plantation and care, especially among youth. These efforts have resulted in greater community participation in environmental causes. Areas around the nurseries have become greener, and local residents now take pride in nurturing trees around homes, roadsides, and schools—turning their villages into miniature green belts.

**Economic Success of the Nurseries:** The economic transformation brought about by Didi Ki Nursery is equally noteworthy. In just a few years, the average annual income from a nursery has grown from ₹1 lakh to nearly ₹2.5 lakhs. This success is not accidental—it is a result of meticulous planning, plant diversity, customer satisfaction, and sustained efforts. The Didis have learned to navigate local markets, liaise with government departments, and even supply saplings for large-scale plantation drives under schemes like MGNREGA and Forest Department initiatives. Many nurseries have also begun diversifying into floriculture and kitchen gardening plants, increasing both impact and revenue.

**Social Impact and Community Engagement:** Beyond economics and environment, the social fabric of the community has evolved. The respect that these women command today is profound. They are seen not only as business owners but as mentors and role models. Local girls now aspire to join SHGs, get trained and start ventures of their own. The positive reinforcement from the community has created a ripple effect, inspiring more SHG women to explore nursery work or allied livelihoods like vermi composting, organic farming, or seed bank management.

**Challenges in Nursery Management:** While the journey has been inspiring, it has not been without hurdles. Women had to learn to deal with weather uncertainties, plant diseases, fluctuating market demands, and supply chain disruptions. Moreover, managing a nursery demands consistent care and time, which many had to balance with household responsibilities. Training women in business processes, digital recordkeeping, and sustainable nursery practices was another challenge. However, with continuous mentoring from JEEVIKA and the resilience of the Didis, these challenges have been turned into stepping stones.

**Vision for Expansion and Sustainability:** The success of Didi Ki Nursery has encouraged expansion plans. The Didis now aim to increase production capacity, introduce more indigenous and climate-resilient species, and improve packaging and logistics. Some have expressed interest in developing eco-tourism elements or herbal plant sales in the future. Plans are also underway to establish nursery clusters, where Didis from different villages can collaborate, share resources, and collectively meet larger orders—especially from government and private entities engaged in CSR or plantation campaigns.

## Conclusion

Didi Ki Nursery stands as a shining example of how grassroots innovation, when combined with vision and community ownership, can bring about holistic development. It bridges the critical intersection between environmental sustainability and women's economic empowerment. What started as a small initiative has today become a movement that not only nurtures trees but also nurtures hope, dignity, and transformation in rural Bihar. As this green journey continues, Didi Ki Nursery offers a replicable model for other regions to adopt—where trees are grown not just for the environment but as symbols of empowered womanhood and sustainable futures.

## From Despair to Dignity: Leelawati Devi's Journey Through Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojana

There was a time when life for Leelawati Devi seemed clouded by hardship and uncertainty. Living in a modest household in a village in Rohtas district, she struggled to make ends meet after a series of unfortunate events left her family vulnerable. Married in 2001 to Rammuni Paswan, a daily wage laborer, Leelawati's life revolved around managing her home and raising their four children. Her husband's meagre income was just enough to survive, but things took a tragic turn when he fell ill and was later diagnosed with a severe mental condition, rendering him unable to work.

With the sole breadwinner incapacitated, the responsibility of the entire household fell on Leelawati's shoulders. Unskilled and unsupported, she was forced to take up daily wage labour just to feed her children and keep the household running. Days were long and harsh and nights filled with worry. The uncertainty of tomorrow haunted her, but her resolve to support her family never wavered.



It was in 2024 that hope arrived through JEEVIKA's Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojana, a targeted intervention to uplift the poorest households and provide them with sustainable livelihoods. Leelawati Devi, who was already a member of the DhanNirankar Self-Help Group and affiliated with the Rani JEEVIKA Mahila Gram Sangathan, was identified as a suitable beneficiary under the scheme. With support and mentoring from the Gram Sangathan, she was encouraged to open a small grocery shop in her village.

What began as a modest venture soon blossomed into a steady source of income. With basic training and ongoing support, Leelawati was able to manage the shop efficiently, sourcing essential items and building a loyal customer base in her community. Her daily income now ranges between ₹ 200 to ₹250—enough to cover household expenses, support her children's education and even save a little for the future.

Leelawati's transformation is not merely economic—it is deeply personal. From being on the brink of destitution, she has emerged as a confident and self-reliant woman who commands respect within her community. The journey from dependency to dignity has empowered her to dream bigger. Today, she aspires to expand her business, educate all her children well, and help other women in similar situations to believe in second chances.

“I am truly grateful to JEEVIKA and the Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojana for showing me a way forward when I had lost all hope,” she says. “Now I save, I earn and I live with dignity.”



**Greening the Economy : How Malti Devi Is Nurturing Livelihoods Through Trees**



In an age where economic challenges and environmental degradation often go hand in hand, Malti Devi stands as a shining example of how one woman can make a difference on both fronts. For over a decade, Malti Devi and her husband Nand Kishor Bhagat have been transforming lives—starting with their own—by nurturing a green livelihood from their village in the Bochaha block of Muzaffarpur district.

Their journey began humbly, with a shared dream and a handful of seeds. Malti Devi, a long-time member of a JEEVIKA-affiliated Self-Help Group since 2012, joined her husband to establish a plant nursery. What started with a small investment of ₹2 lakh has now grown into a flourishing business, generating an annual income of ₹ 5 to ₹ 7 lakh. Each year, they raise and sell around 20,000 to 25,000 saplings, catering to demand from individual customers, local institutions and government schemes like MGNREGA and the Forest Department.

Their nursery is a vibrant hub of biodiversity. From **Mahogany, Ashoka, Teak and Jamun**, to **Mango, Guava, Lemon and ornamental plants**, the couple takes pride in cultivating life in every shade of green. Malti Devi lovingly tends to each sapling, understanding that every plant sold is a step toward a greener future and a more secure life.

But their contribution doesn't stop at plant cultivation. Alongside the nursery, Malti and her husband also engage in **floriculture and vegetable farming**, ensuring a diversified income stream. Their marigold fields bloom with golden hues, and seasonal vegetables find their way to local markets. This multi-layered livelihood has enabled them to provide quality education to their children, build financial stability, and extend seasonal employment to **10–15 workers** for up to six months every year. Malti often speaks about the emotional fulfilment her work brings. “Yes, it is physically demanding,” she admits. “But watching a seed I plant turn into a tree in someone else's backyard, knowing it will provide shade, fruit or beauty for years—that's a feeling of deep joy and accomplishment.”

Her plants now travel beyond Muzaffarpur—reaching buyers in neighboring districts and even across the state.

“I feel blessed that through my work, I can support my family, provide employment to others, and contribute to environmental protection,” says Malti Devi. “Thanks to the support of JEEVIKA, I now know that financial success and ecological responsibility can grow together—just like the trees we plant.”