

"HARVEST OF HOPE: SABITRI'S JOURNEY TO SOCIAL SECURITY"

Sabitri Amma, a 70-year-old woman, has three children, none of whom live with her. Her elderly husband is the sole breadwinner of the family, working as a small, landless farmer, which provides limited income through shared cropping and daily wage labor. Unfortunately, his earnings are insufficient to cover their expenses, including the medical needs of both Sabitri and her husband. Neither of their two sons provides any support, and their daughter is married and not living with them. Sabitri and her husband are struggling to make ends meet in their old age.

Sabitri has applied for assistance under the old age pension scheme on seven occasions but has faced rejection most of the time due to incorrect application and documentation. She reached out to various people, including her ward member, for assistance in being included in the old age pension scheme but did not receive any help from anyone in the Gram Panchayat. Additionally, she encountered challenges due to the procedural complexity, particularly the digital divide, as she struggled with the online application process without any support.



Despite being eligible for the old age pension, Sabitri lacked awareness regarding specific requirements for the scheme, such as the necessary documents and where to obtain them, as well as how to navigate the online application process. Eventually, Sabitri received assistance from Community Resource Persons (CRP) in her village, who helped her gather the required documents, including her Aadhar card, age proof, family income proof, and residential proof.

With their support, Sabitri reapplied for the pension scheme under the Madhubabu Pension Yojana (MPY) at a nearby Jana Sewa Kendra (JSK).

With the support of UNICEF-India, the YSD team organized training sessions on ‘how to support eligible excluded beneficiaries in various social security schemes’. This training covered acquiring the necessary documents, completing online applications, generating acknowledgements, and checking application status. The team also raised awareness among the Sarpanch and ward members of the Gram Panchayat about the importance of including the most vulnerable and excluded families and individuals in various social security schemes, aiming to reduce their immediate vulnerability and alleviate hunger.

Finally, on August 15, 2023, Sabitri received her long-awaited pension, and she is now receiving a monthly pension of Rs. 500 under the Madhubabu Pension Yojana (MPY), a social assistance program by the Odisha Government. While Rs. 500 is not sufficient for her living expenses, it has eased her immediate financial needs.

“Mi mada tuku dhanyabadlu, idi naku cala undi, devudu, mim malni ashrivadistadu!”
“Thank you for your support, this is a lot for me, god bless you”,

Sabitri Amma said in Telugu.