

A pledge for economic empowerment

Dhiru Bagdi of Chouhatta, Birbhum learnt the art of using Shola - Indian cork - for making idols and different showpieces at Bolpur. He started using his skill to produce gift items and used to sale at gift shops. He also worked for community pujas as a lead team member in construction of puja pandals by using Shola.

Thami Bagdi was mentored by her husband Dhiru in the craft. The two of them together trained nine more women of the neighbourhood and Thami thereafter formed 'Sankalpa SHG' in 2009. Since they had their perspective clear and the trade identified beforehand, they immediately plunged into action. Local block administration extended support. The group was graded and after receiving the initial revolving fund the group started taking bank loan



in several doses. They have taken six loans so far, ranging from rupees one and a half lakh to rupees three lakh.

Marketing of their products is always a challenge. They tried with Manjusha, but the experiment failed. Manjusha offers lower price and is also very late in payment. Gift shops probably is a better option. But delayed payment is a problem there too.

The group came to different fairs and the sale is usually good. They have been participating in the State Sabala Mela for several years in a row. Here also they could get a good return. However, when they cannot register good sales in the first few days of the mela, they panic. Taking back the fragile and delicate items is a big concern. They have to go for underpricing in the last couple of days to clear their stock. It is kind of a distress sale. But they do not have options. Still struggling with relatively lower income, the SHG looks for better and larger opportunities to improve sales.