



SWEATING IT OUT: Women self-help group members baking buns in Kancheepuram. — PHOTO: A. MURALITHARAN

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Grit and timely aid pay off

The determination to achieve and the timely help from a banking institution and a non-governmental organisation helped Sri Mahalakshmi self-help group, Periyar Nagar, Kancheepuram, notch up a good beginning in the bakery industry.

Formed in January 2001 with 12 women, the group started making masala powders, pickles and other homemade food products and sold them locally. Their performance

and commitment to repay loan has prompted Indian Bank, Theradi Branch, to help the group in identifying an NGO, which could help the group streamline their activities and establish themselves as a successful organisation.

NGO roped in

The bank officials roped in Hand-in-Hand for nurturing the skills of the SHG members. Subsequently, the group was trained in making

bakery products.

Six members were sent to Madurai for a three-day training at India Food Company (engaged in supply of bakery machines) in November 2004. They were also taken to some bakery units run successfully by SHGs at Panruti in Cuddalore district.

After the training, the group set up a bakery unit at Periyar Nagar, taking a term loan of Rs.2.30 lakh (Rs.2 lakh for buying machinery and

Rs.30, 000 as working capital) and started making buns. Here again, Hand-in-Hand came to the aid of the SHG, helping it procure daily supply orders from a garment export company.

From March 2005, the group started supplying 1,200 pieces of buns daily to Intimate Fashion Company. The NGO took care of the transport of buns packed in paper covers.

"We owe a debt of gratitude to

Indian Bank for extending financial help and Hand-in-Hand for providing transport facility free of cost to help us make a good beginning," says Sheela Mahesh, who was instrumental in the formation of the SHG. The group received the Best SHG Award from President A.P.-J. Abdul Kalam at the Centenary Celebrations of Indian Bank held in Chennai recently.

V. VENKATASUBRAMANIAN
in Kancheepuram