

South Africa to use SHG model

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Chennai,

Several decades ago India and South Africa cooperated to fight apartheid and colonialism. Today we should come together to fight another common enemy, poverty, said South African minister for agriculture and land affairs, Ms L Xingwana. Visiting various enterprises of women self help groups in Kancheepuram on Wednesday, she said she wanted to replicate the success achieved by these women in her country.

"Mahatma Gandhi has been an inspiring leader in our country during freedom struggle. We want to take forward this common history by helping each other in alleviating poverty and fighting unemployment. There are many similarities between the two countries like the state of women and our economies' dependence on agriculture. Through exchange programmes we can learn something from each other's experiences," she said.

Ms Xingwana visited apparel production centres, chicken farms, bakery units and jasmine farms set up by women self help groups.

She was impressed by the 'waste to wealth scheme' a network set up by these groups to collect segregated waste and convert organic waste into manure.

"In our country we believe that empowering a woman is empowering the family. Like in Tamil Nadu, there too women are more responsible than men. So we want to train them to be entrepreneurs. We want to train them especially on financial management and micro finance and cooperation to set up enterprises for sustainable livelihood," she said.

The South African delegation's main purpose was to evolve a training module that would be tailor-made to the needs of the South African women.

Dr Kalpana Shankar, CEO of Hand In Hand, said consistent flow of micro credit along with increase in profit and consistent efforts of mentors and members of self help groups was the reason behind the success of these groups.



EMPOWERING WOMEN: South African minister for agriculture and land affairs L Xingwana talks to members of self help groups trained by Hand in Hand, an NGO, working against child labour in Kancheepuram on Thursday. A DC Photograph