



SUCCESS STORY

Piggery Farming and Improved Housing Management: Strengthening Livelihoods and Food Security among Tribal Women of Sankarghola and Ghilaguri, Bongaigaon District, Assam *From Traditional Piggery to a Sustainable Livelihood*

Gauranga Das* & Parag Saikia
Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Bongaigaon, Abhayapuri, Assam-783 384
Email: gauranga.das@aau.ac.in

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Background

For many tribal households in the villages of Sankarghola and Ghilaguri in Bongaigaon district of Assam, livestock rearing has traditionally been an important part of rural life. Among the different livestock enterprises, piggery i.e., local indigenous pigs; locally known as 'Jelpa' has particular significance because these pigs can be reared with locally available feed resources, require comparatively low initial investment and provide regular income through the sale of piglets and mature pigs.

However, traditional pig-rearing practices were often associated with inadequate housing, poor sanitation, limited ventilation, improper waste management and insufficient attention to animal health. These challenges affected pig growth, increased the risk of disease and reduced the economic returns available to farming families.

Recognizing the potential of piggery as a livelihood activity, tribal women of Sankarghola and Ghilaguri were encouraged and supported to adopt improved piggery practices, with particular emphasis on scientific pig housing, hygiene, feeding, health care and overall farm management.

The Intervention

One of the important interventions was the introduction of improved housing management for pigs. Women farmers were encouraged to move away from poorly maintained traditional shelters and adopt cleaner, safer and more suitable pig housing systems.

The improved housing practices included construction and maintenance of clean and durable pig shelters, adequate space for movement and resting of pigs, proper ventilation and protection from excessive heat, rain and cold, provision of suitable flooring and drainage to keep the housing area dry, regular cleaning and disinfection of the pig shed and provision of clean drinking water and hygienic feeding arrangements.

SeSTA, Bongaigaon initiated to improve the livelihood of women tribal farmers covering few villages under Sankarghola and Ghilaguri gram panchayat through piggery demonstration programme. A total of 105 women farmers were covered under this initiative.

The programme combined financial support, credit linkage and technical training so that farmers could start or strengthen their piggery units and adopt improved management practices. SeSTA, Bongaigaon arranged different forms of financial support were made available to the participating women farmers through various institutions and projects. The beneficiary-wise details are given below.

Sl. No	Source of Support	No. of Farmers	Support per Farmer (Rs.)	Total Amount received (Rs.)
1.	NABARD – RF Support	17	15,000.00	2,55,000.00
2.	ASRLM - CIF Loan	15	15,000.00	2,25,000.00
3.	Bank Loan	13	25,000.00	3,25,000.00
4.	Agri SE – Empowering Her Roots Project	55	8,000.00	4,40,000.00
5.	Own Contribution	5	Self-financed	-
Total External Financial Support				12,45,000.00

Capacity building was an important component of the programme. Training and technical guidance were provided by Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Bongaigaon. The farmers were oriented on practical and scientific methods of piggery management.



Fig 1.Improved housing management for pigs



Fig 2. Capacity building training programme arranged by KVK, Bongaigaon at Sankarghola



Fig 3. Women farmer engaged in cleaning of pig sty for better management of pigs

Under technical guidance of Animal Science expert from Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Bongaigaon, these simple improvements made a significant difference in the management of the animals. Women farmers became more conscious of the relationship between clean housing, animal health, growth and profitability.

Women at the Centre of Change

The initiative has placed tribal women at the centre of the livelihood transformation. Women who were previously involved mainly in household activities and small-scale livestock rearing are increasingly taking greater responsibility for pig management, including feeding, cleaning, health observation, breeding management and marketing.

Through practical guidance and exposure to improved management practices, the women developed greater confidence in treating piggery not merely as a traditional household activity but as a small-scale enterprise with income-generating potential.

Improved Livelihood Opportunities

Piggery provides multiple avenues for income generation. Farmers can earn from the sale of piglets, growers and mature pigs, depending on the production cycle. Better housing and management contribute to healthier animals and improved growth, which can ultimately enhance the returns from the enterprise.

For the women of Sankarghola and Ghilaguri, piggery has therefore become an important supplementary livelihood activity. Income generated from pig rearing can support household expenditure, children's education, agricultural activities, health-related expenses and other essential needs. The activity also provides an opportunity to reinvest part of the income in additional pigs, better housing, feed and farm improvements, creating a cycle of gradual enterprise development.

A Model of Women-Led Rural Enterprise

The experience of Sankarghola and Ghilaguri demonstrates that relatively simple improvements in livestock management can create meaningful livelihood opportunities when women are provided with appropriate knowledge, technical support and encouragement. The transformation is not only about increasing the number of pigs. It is about changing the way livestock is managed—from traditional rearing towards a more planned, hygienic, health-conscious and economically oriented system.

The women farmers have emerged as important contributors to household income and decision-making. Their growing skills and confidence are helping to strengthen the economic role of women within their families and communities.



Fig 4. Improved management practices of pigs by women farmers

Conclusion

The journey of the tribal women of Sankarghola and Ghilaguri, Bongaigaon district, illustrates how piggery farming, combined with improved housing and scientific management practices, can contribute to livelihood improvement, household food security, women's economic empowerment and greater resilience of tribal families.

What began as a traditional livestock-rearing activity is gradually evolving into a more organized and sustainable livelihood enterprise.