

Women's groups take charge of war against plastics in Thanjavur

■ SHG members learn to use alternate materials as January 1 ban deadline on one-time-use plastics draws nearer

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Vasugi is a member of Mullai Malar Women Self Help Group of Vilar village near Thanjavur. She along with nine other members took training in producing paper bags at the Rural Self Employment Training Institute of the Indian Overseas Bank (IOB), lead bank of Thanjavur district.

In the training held at the Institute at Thanjavur between July 16 and July 26, she learnt how to make paper bags using newspaper and chart paper.

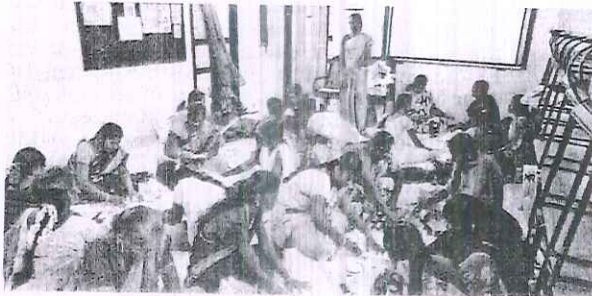
"Now our group prepares paper bags and supply to shops in Vilar and other villages. Our aim is to eradicate plastic carry bags and put paper bags in their place," said Vasugi. We are selling paper bags per kilo at ₹20, she said.

Selvarani of Monnyampatti near Thanjavur is a member of Lily Malar Women SHG. Two of the group members took training in producing jute bags in the training given by RSETI from September 8 to September 26.

"We were given jute clothes and trained to prepare bags from them by cutting and stitching," said Selvarani. Now we are supplying jute pouches prepared by us for keeping pencil, pens etc to schools," she said. This will help in eradicating plastics, she said. "However the machine we have to stitch jute bags is small. We need a big machine. We hope the bank will help us," she said.

Thus in the war against plastics, women, who are mostly members of SHGs have been involved in Thanjavur district.

Training has helped them



Women taking training in producing paper and jute bags at RSETI of IOB at Thanjavur.

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to produce paper and jute bags and sell them to the people, thus helping in the replacement of plastics.

P. Rajasekaran, director, Rseti, IOB, said that training has been given following the request from A. Annadurai, Thanjavur district collector who has taken up the fight against plastics by setting up help desks to popularise alternate products like jute, paper, bags and cups, plates made of betel and plantain fibres at the Collectorate.

The Rseti has given training to 29 women in paper products and 23 women in jute products. "We are ready to give training to more people also. It will be a continuous process as the fight is against ubiquitous plastics, which is herculean," said Rajasekaran.

The training institute has been imparting skills to thousands of women and youth in various trades ever since its inception.

"The institute has given training in hand embroidery, tailoring, ornamental jewellery making, dairy and poultry farming, advanced digital photography, digital film making, car driving, high tech arc welding, two-wheeler repair,

motor rewinding, AC and fridge repair, catering, fish and mushroom culture, preparation of bakery and coir products, food processing, computer software etc. Many of our trainees are now traders and entrepreneurs," Rajasekaran said.

Thanjavur district collector has roped in private banks also in the fight against plastics.

The ICICI bank has been urged to produce jute and paper bags and supply to shops to create awareness about using them as an alternate to plastics.

Voluntary organisations like 'Clean Thanjavur Movement' have taken up popularising alternate products for plastics besides launching awareness campaign for putting an end to plastics.

"Namakkal town has been declared free of plastics. We can't see even a bit of plastics in the town. Like that we have to make Thanjavur. It is not difficult," said Vaidhyanathan, secretary of the Movement.

Already traders are exploring alternates to plastics. For instance, a hotel on Gandhiji road has introduced biodegradable bags to carry food items in parcels.

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