

Bathula Vijayabharati

Bathula Vijayabharati, 60, is an embodiment of that. Since the 1990s, Vijayabharathi has worked in rural Andhra Pradesh through thrift and credit societies aimed at economic empowerment of rural women to bring about a movement of social change. For the poor of Orvakallu village of Kurnool district, she is also their 'Amma' (mother), who counsels them on all matters. Her apartment in Kurnool and a small room in the Samakya office at Orvakallu is always buzzing with women and men of the various Self Help Groups she has helped set up.

Vijayabharati is not known only within the confines of Kurnool or even just in Andhra Pradesh. She is a state guest in over 20 states where she is a regular visitor and consultant for anti-poverty and social change programs. She has visited all SAARC countries, regularly training community workers. "Not just me but many of Orvakallu SHG women are also trained as CRP (Community Resource Person) and in turn have trained thousands across the country and abroad," she says.

Vijayabharathi's efforts have transformed the once arid and water-starved area into a society throbbing with social change. "We had almost 40,000 visitors from 22 states, 7 Union Territories and also several SAARC countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, Srilanka, Sudan, Pakistan and Rwanda," she says proudly.