



Chicken vaccine broadening economic avenues in Jharkhand state of India



Silanti Linda lives in a village, about 15 kilometres away from Ranchi, the capital city of Jharkhand state in India. Silanti and her family are part of the tribal community that has traditionally depended on farms, forests and livestock. They are however increasingly having to seek additional sources of income due to reduced productivity of the land and deforestation.

Many of the community members have taken up blue-collared jobs in nearby urban areas. Migration to big cities out of the state is also a common phenomenon.

Silanti's husband works as a driver for a privately owned organisation in Ranchi. He earns about INR 4,000 (US \$ 60) per month. Because of the high cost of living, this income is not sufficient hence the family's need for an additional source of income.

Vaccine brings new opportunities

The introduction of the LaSota vaccine against Newcastle Disease (ND) has brought them a new economic opportunity. They can now keep and sell chickens because they are no longer being wiped out by the deadly ND (known locally as Ranikhet). "As we can get some income from chicken sales now, we can even save some money," says Silanti Linda, a 32-year-old woman highlighting the economic benefit of vaccination against ND.

Keeping backyard poultry has been a traditional practice but the widely prevalent ND has regularly wiped out most of the chicken population during outbreak episodes. Silanti had three to four chickens at any given time. Now, one year after starting vaccination, she owns 40 to 45 chickens at a time. In the last 3 months, she has earned about INR 4,000 (US \$ 60) from chicken sales. Although still a modest amount by any standard, it is an increase of about 33% to the average monthly household income. The additional income not only helps in meeting the increasing food expenses, but also helps in giving better education to their only child and takes care of medical expenses of the family. Even after all these expenses, she still manages to save some money.

For Silanti and other people who live below the poverty line, the economic benefits they have achieved due to the introduction of the Newcastle Disease vaccine is significant. She, like many others, has been able to revive a dormant occupation – chicken rearing.

Regular poultry businesses benefit too

However, the benefits are not limited to the poor alone. People in the regular poultry business have also been able to better manage and grow their existing businesses with the introduction of the vaccine. Before the vaccine was popularised, their trade survived marginally. They managed to negate the effects of ND by constantly buying new chicks from the market. But this meant additional “working capital” was constantly needed to offset low profit margins. Also, the farmers needed to spend more time on poultry management, leaving them with less time for other occupations.

The LaSota vaccine has helped these poultry keepers by decreasing their expenses on new chicks. The profit margins of the local poultry businesses have gone up. Umesh Lohra, a 54-year-old man, and his wife have been managing poultry for the last few years. They managed to grow an average flock size of 400 to 500, despite high mortality rates. They earned about INR 5,000 (US \$ 75) per month from chicken sales. But now, after initiating vaccination, they earn INR 7,500 (US \$ 112), or 50% more from chicken sales. As there is reduced chicken mortality after ND vaccination, they do not need to stock up on new chicks regularly. This saves substantial capital costs.

“We simply do not need to spend the amount of time we used to earlier. Hence, the management of poultry has become flexible,” says Umesh. The total family income now is almost INR 14,000 (US \$ 209). Poultry sales is about half of total family income.

In 16 districts of Jharkhand state, where the vaccine was introduced, the effect is palpable in the economic lives of the people.



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