

Meet Kugatheswari...

Kandaiya Kugatheswari (39) sells chilli powder and wheat flour for a living. She started this business after her husband passed away following kidney failure. Their son was only 7 years old at that time and she had twin girls who were just three months old.



Her husband was a farmer and the sole breadwinner of the family. With his death, Kugatheswari needed to find a way to support her family.

“I had to find something I could do while looking after my children,” she says, “One of my aunts suggested making chilli powder as it was a hard thing to get in my area.”

“I bought a grinder, an extension cord and a few utensils on credit, with a promise to pay it back in small instalments,” she says.

First, she sold only chilli powder and the business picked up fast in her neighbourhood. The quality of the product was so good that the word began to spread and people came to buy from neighbouring villages as well. Gradually she also began to produce roasted rice flour.

Her mother and her sister helped her by taking care of the children, while they assist with house chores when she was busy.

Currently, the business helps her earn LKR 10,000 a month and she spends that on her children’s education, extra classes and food.

“Most of it I spend on the extra classes for my children and their school needs,” she says, “I want them to study well and do well in life.”

However, due to the government restrictions implemented due to COVID-19, she is finding it extremely difficult to sell her products. Therefore, she has started selling wheat flour to earn her means of income during this period.

Sometimes she has to buy groceries on credit when her earnings dry up. She settles her debts at the end of the month. If one of the children falls sick, she sometimes have to borrow money to take them to the doctor and buy medicine and pays back when she gets business.

Kugatheswari’s plan is to buy a grinder with higher capacity and increase the production. She also wants to buy a packaging machine so that she can sell her products in the shops in town. She also hopes to build a proper outlet in her home.

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