200 women form startup to make masks for COVID-19 battle, now delayed by orders

With their husbands being laid off or facing salary cuts amidst the lockdown, these women decided to supplement the family income through a new venture.

HUBLI: 200 women in the twin cities of Hubballi-Dharwad who joined hands to form a startup that makes masks for the COVID-19 battle now find themselves delayed with orders.

Thanks to the Deshpande Foundation which brought them together, the women earn around Rs 9,000 per month now and are aiming for the sky. (Photo: S Biswanath, EPS)

By Arvindkar Shrinivas
Express News Service

They will soon register their startup, Swavalambi Sakhi Producer Company Limited, with the Union government to avail benefits.

Rajeshwari Lodhi, deputy manager of the micro-entrepreneurship programme of the foundation, said the women were given training in making masks as per WHO standards. Recently, they got an order from a Bengaluru-based organisation to make 10,000 masks for schoolchildren with cartoon pictures on them. Likewise, they got orders for nearly one lakh masks from various companies and organisations.

“We purchase cotton and khadi clothes from local entrepreneurs and give these along with sodium hypochlorite to a team of women for washing and pressing. After washing, another team of women cuts the clothes and then hands it over to a third team to stitch. Once the masks are stitched, they are sent to the Deshpande Foundation start-up centre for sanitization. After this, they are packed and released to the market where buyers can directly use them without washing,” she added.

The masks were initially distributed for free to organisations and vendors who were informed of the benefits of three-layer masks which can be reused 30 times after washing. Once the users were convinced of the quality, orders started to flow in for the masks which cost just Rs 15 each.

On the occasion of World MSME Day, this startup created amid the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that every threat can be turned into an opportunity which can not only help those involved earn a livelihood but also serve society at large.