

FIVE DAYS THAT CHANGED THE PRICE

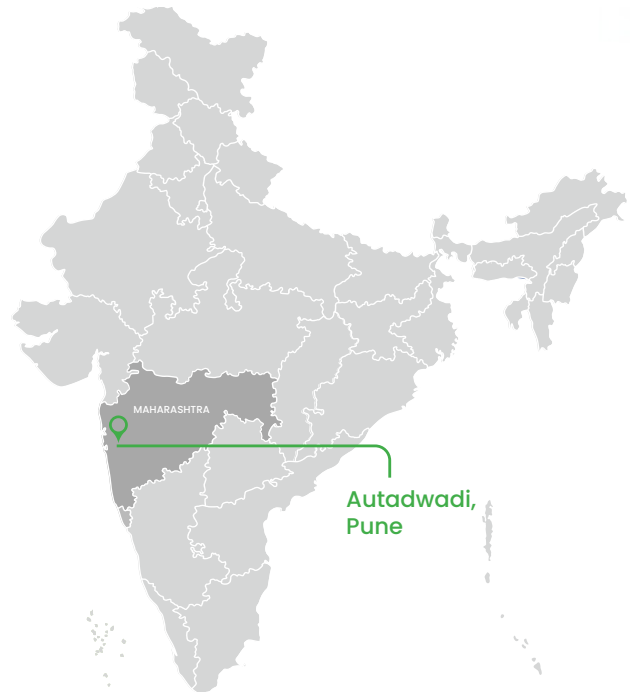
A Women-Led SHG's Journey from Distress Sale to Market Choice



From Price Takers to Market Negotiators

When a truckload of bananas left Autadwadi for Pune's wholesale markets, the selling price was usually decided by the traders waiting at the other end. Snehlata Sonawane and the 180 women of Jijau Mahila Bachat Gat had little bargaining power. The group would procure around 5,000 kg of bananas and send them straight to Pune's wholesale market. Bought at INR 12 per kilogram, the fruit was sold on arrival at INR 14 per kilogram, a margin of roughly 7%, which was further reduced by an average 2% spoilage before the unripe fruit reached a buyer. Unripe bananas cannot be stored for long, so the fruit had to be sold quickly, regardless of market conditions.

The economics of the business were constrained not by demand, but by time. Limited access to finance, driven by low awareness among financial institutions, also constrained investment in micro cold rooms that could have broken this cycle.



With access to cold storage, we now have the flexibility to aggregate produce and negotiate better prices.

Snehlata Sonawane, Chairperson, Jijau Mahila Bachat Gat, on what changed once the group could choose the morning it sold

SUGAM-CSS helped turn a financing dead-end into a business opportunity. The introduction of a 20 MT biomass-based ripening facility gave the women's collective something it had never had before: time. With the ability to ripen and hold produce for a few additional days, the group could choose when to sell rather than accept whatever price the market offered on arrival. The investment became viable through 50% viability gap funding, and the women were able to confidently manage the associated operating and compliance processes themselves.

The procurement model remained unchanged. The transformation came through better market timing and local value addition. Bananas that once left Autadwadi at INR 14 per kilogram now leave at INR 19 per kilogram.



From Farm Gate to Market: The Business Model

Procurement

Buy raw bananas locally at INR 12/kg for the 20 MT unit

Ripening

Run a 5-day cycle to eliminate urgent distress sales and control market timing

Premium Price Jump

Elevates market prices from INR 14/kg (before intervention) to INR 19/kg (ripened)

Massive Margins

Secured an extra INR 5/kg in value realization, driving an ~18% increase in profit margin over pre-cold room sales



By The Numbers: What Five Days Is Worth

One ripening cycle (5 days) in July and two in August. Same fruit, same suppliers, same buyers.

	July – Cycle 1 (5,000 kg)	August – Cycle 2 (9,000 kg)	August – Cycle 3 (7,000 kg)
Expenses (INR)			
Procurement	60,000	1,08,000	84,000
Biomass	900	1,050	975
Labour	3,000	3,000	3,000
Transport	2,500	2,500	2,500
Total Cost (INR)	66,400	1,14,550	90,475
Revenue (INR)	89,300	1,61,500	1,24,450
Profit (INR)	22,900 (26%)	46,950 (29%)	30,975 (27%)

* percentages represent profit margin on revenue

21,000 kg handled in three cycles | **INR 1,03,825** total profit | **~15 days** of operation



Impact on Ground

One ripening cycle in July and two in August.
Same fruit, same suppliers, same buyers.

INR 14 > 19/kg

Selling price after
controlled ripening
(+INR 5/kg value gain)

< 5%

Operating cost as
a share of revenue

~26–30%

Profit margin,
consistently, across
all 3 cycles

2 women

Direct jobs
created

INR 1,03,825

Total profit across 3
cycles – in just-15 days

180 members

Economic
empowerment



What Made It Work

An established
banana trading
network and strong
existing market
linkages with Pune

Right-sized, low-cost
biomass technology,
simple to operate,
with operating cost
under 5% of revenue

End-to-end SUGAM
CSS support from
opportunity assessment
to VGF, de-risking a
first-time technology
adoption