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Hope for Tomorrow

Swarnalatha lived in the village of Kalampukur in the West Bengal, India. In October 2006, a severe drought hit many districts in the region, leaving crops withered and water scarce. In response, Episcopal Relief & Development partnered with the Diocese of Durgapur in the Church of North India (CNI) to provide dry rations for 100 people. The partnership also installed 34 water pumps through the formation of 34 cooperatives in 13 villages.

The Thoma Cooperative was formed in Kalampukur, an agricultural village. Swarnalatha, her husband, Sumanmadi, and two children are part of the Santal Tribe who resides in Kalampukur. Swarnalatha prepared a deed and signed over a small piece of her family's land to the cooperative for the installation of the water pump, as the property was elevated and allowed for water drainage to other low-lying fields. Swarnalatha and other members of the group pay each month to use the water pump and cultivate their land throughout the year.

Along with her female friends in the village, Swarnalatha is proud to use the water pump – it's the first mechanical device they've ever handled. "It's a dream come true," she said.

What's more, this is the first time they've cultivated crops other than paddy during the off season; they've always relied on the annual monsoon for rain. Now, after the paddy season, Swarnalatha and her husband planted jute (a vegetable fiber) and mustard, which they sold in the local market to earn extra income. They plan to save a portion of the money to begin minor repairs to their home.

With an initial donation of land and a partnership between Episcopal Relief & Development and CNI, Swarnalatha and her family planted seeds that reap hope for the future.