

# *Skills to Succeed*

Impact Report

2015 - 19



Urmul Rural Health Research & Development Trust

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**Skills to Succeed Impact Narrative 2015-19**  
Urmul Rural Health Research & Development Trust

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Urmul Trust would like to express our deep gratitude to Accenture and Charities Aid Foundation for the continued support to this programme.



**accenture**

**CAF**  
India



We participated in 2 sets of training of Tie-dye and Block printing, respectively. It was a great learning experience of 15 days working with our trainer. I liked block printing more over tie-dye, and I wish to further my skills and professional work in Block printing. If Block printing unit comes up in my area, I'd love to be a part of it and also inspire youngsters to pursue this

**Rachna, Chandasar village, Rajasthan**

When I visited Bajju for the Enterprise Development training, I got to know about the stitching unit in there. I liked the quality finish and accuracy in measurements. I learned to stitch and very soon conducted Skills to Succeed program training in my village Gharana Mandi. We trained participants on making sanitary napkins and up-cycled material bags. This training for me was one of the best moments in my life where I learned how to patiently teach women artisans.

**Rani Kaur, Gharana village, Rajasthan**

I was very new to this field and had never stepped out of the village until I joined the Skills to Succeed program in 2018. Soon after the training under the program, I got a chance to visit Bikaner, Jaipur, and Delhi. I got an opportunity to understand the market - colors, designs and most importantly the quality. During the exposure visit, I learned to observe the trends in the market and convert the possibilities into products. The exposure visit boosted my confidence.

**Satpal Kaur, Village 29 A.S.D, Rajasthan**

Before enrolling in the program, I had no idea about weaving but it changed in the months during the training. I got to learn and practice frame weaving during the two-week training, but I did not stop after that. I continued making woven products and soon I started making some money selling some of those locally. Now we're getting job orders through URMUL Seemant. By using manufacturing waste cloth, we're professionally making yoga mats, coffee-table mats, mats(daari), and doormats (paidan). These products are good for the environment as well. I enjoy weaving.

**Veerpal Kaur, Village 26 B.L.D, Rajasthan**

I practiced Kashidakari (embroidery) since childhood but never really took it seriously. I had the technical skills for embroidering but that is all. Through this program, not only did I perfect my skills into the profession, but it also improved my aesthetics. We learned about color combinations and work discipline and observed quality control under close monitoring of trainers. Throughout the training program, I practiced a lot. Soon, I was given my first chance to develop samples for the client. My samples were appreciated and eventually approved. Now I've perfected Soof, Kaccha, Pakka, Kannada, Kharak, Khanbiri, Kaanch styles of embroidery and regularly getting work.

**Rangu Bai, Village 2-DO, Rajasthan**

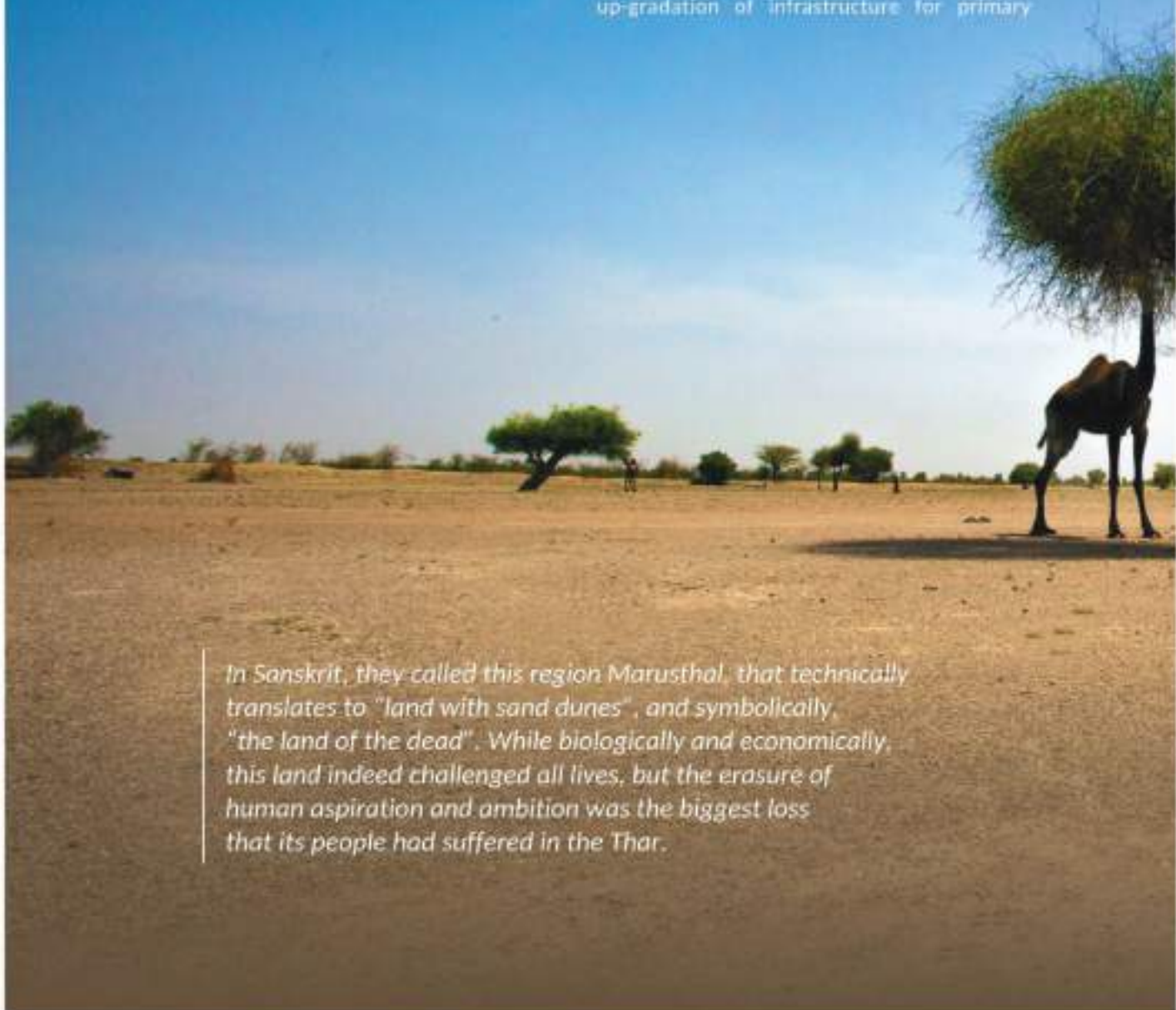
# THE DESERT CONTEXT

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The western region of Rajasthan features unique characteristics that sculpt its life and way of living. From weather to the social environment, from economy to systemic and social structuring, every aspect delineates specifically to the geography. The hostile and inhospitable landscape with its extreme climatic conditions is marred with a feudalistic and patriarchal social setup. There is already an inequitable division of limited resources and opportunities, making living in desert full of struggles amidst innumerable variables. Therefore interweaving a 'constant struggle' in the dynamics towards achieving stability.

Over the past thirty years, the Indian Thar has witnessed one of the fastest demographic growth in the country. This population increase in Thar has not been accompanied by any commensurate up-gradation of infrastructure for primary

*In Sanskrit, they called this region Marusthal, that technically translates to "land with sand dunes", and symbolically, "the land of the dead". While biologically and economically, this land indeed challenged all lives, but the erasure of human aspiration and ambition was the biggest loss that its people had suffered in the Thar.*





services. More than eighty percent of the population lives in rural areas and their lives are based on land, livestock, and labor. The privatization of land and industry has created newer crevices in the socio-economic structuring. There has been continuous marginalization of the poor farmers dependent on village 'commons' and the smaller artisans dependent on handicrafts.

Vulnerable communities practice coping strategies of migrations. The seasonal migration patterns make it a challenge to institutionalize any form of service delivery - be it health, education, an extension of banking or agriculture-related services. This results in inadequate capacities to face challenges, lesser aware and distorted learning patterns in the youth. They are further incapacitated to be eventual drivers of the future.

The rapid reconfiguration has erratically overlaid the existing loopholes and ambiguities in the systems with newer systemic discrepancies. Amidst this, the efforts towards education and gender disparities are strained. New aspirational values are affecting traditional social spaces. Conservative practices and feudal customs cage and silence the women while men continue to hold the reins of decision making. Literacy for this section of the society is abysmally low which, along with other disparities, curbs the development of the local women.

In this schema of life, handicrafts become a ray of hope as it remains an important non-farm livelihood alternative and a resilient drought-proofing mechanism for the people of the desert. A varied range of handicrafts is still popular today and proves to be a crucial part of living.




# SKILLS TO SUCCEED

**T**raditional craft skills that have been a regular means of earning livelihood in rural India for over 20 million artisans presently suffer from declining skills, lack of markets, devaluation of handcrafted products, and lack of sustainable livelihood opportunities in changing markets. Though the Handicraft and Handloom sector is an INR 24,300 crore industry contributing INR 10,000 crore to India's export earnings annually, it contributes to only 2% of the USD 400 billion worth global market for handicrafts. Despite the huge potential to generate employment, wealth creation is limited to a few master artisans. These few artisans are exposed to national and international markets, urban designers, and big social enterprises procuring crafts goods from artisans. Whereas the actual artisans continue to work as wage-based laborers. They lack bargaining power, information, and access to new markets, customer feedback, access to working capital.

They lack entrepreneurial skills and competence to innovate products for new markets.

This sector is still highly unorganized and informal. The rural marginalized artisans in their struggle for sustenance are giving up their traditional skills. They are forced to migrate to urban areas in search of low, and unskilled employment in the industry. Moreover, though there is significant participation of women in the traditional cottage industries they remain in oblivion. They seldom get the opportunity to practice their traditional craft skills professionally leading to a meaningless engagement for them.

For sustainable enterprise development, there is a continuous need to empower women artisan groups through the professionalization of their craft-based skills. It would enable them to be brought into the mainstream economy. This



## The Theory of Change

*Capacity enhancement is a strategic and a powerful tool that can improve the potential of a value chain for socio-economic development. It strives for responsive behavioral and attitudinal change, by developing skills, exchanging knowledge on focus themes, acting on feedback of participants, and promoting dialogue among stakeholders.*



requires capacitating and handholding the women artisans. There needs to be the creation of a systematic value chain through a holistic business incubation program. This program would address entrepreneurship development by providing support on institutional design, business plan training, financial literacy, product development, technology, outreach, working capital, and direct market access.

Rajasthan is an important hub of crafts ranging from embroidery, dyeing to weaving and pottery. Thousands of artisans through various crafts groups have not only secured their livelihoods but are also catalyzing the revival of crafts through their livelihoods. URMUL has also played a significant role in preserving and enhancing the crafts and artisans in western Rajasthan. Despite a huge institutional experience, URMUL crafts value chains had also, in the last ten years, faced systemic and market changes. Thus they needed an external stimulus to revitalize the existing set of artisans and crafts institutions. These institutions were being prepared for the new realities with new sets of artisans being trained for it. Thus to extend multi-pronged support to these communities, in 2015, the Skills to Succeed program was visualized to play that role.

## Impact Narrative

*Skills to Succeed program has successfully facilitated the ecosystem for enhancing crafts value chain in the Thar desert by providing a package of support services to artisans, crafts organizations and leaders. These enabling services included crafts and management training, the introduction of new crafts, revolving funds and access to markets, technologies, experimentation and learning. This publication is an attempt to reflect on the program - interventions, learnings and the way forward.*



# CRAFT GROUPS INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAMME

## Embroidery:

Embroidery groups are women from Pakistan refugee communities of the 1971 Indo-Pak war. They were settled in the command area of Indira Gandhi Canal. Unfortunately, agriculture lands which were allotted to them were not completely irrigated. So, they all were living in very deprived conditions. The old women in the refugee communities were gifted with the beautiful traditional craft of Sindhi Bharat and Soofe hand embroidery. In the last 30 years, URMUL has not only revived this embroidery but has also strived to get the recognition and form a

collective brand of their own. Through this project, URMUL collaborated with these veteran artisans to train community youth to keep this beautiful craft alive. The working artisans were coming of age and the succeeding generation had to be trained to enhance the skills of embroidery paired up with management skills. The program encouraged inducing the process of generational transfer of craft skills. The various forms of embroidery that were part of the program included, Mukka, Soofe, Sindhi Bharat, Kacha, etc.





### Tie and Dye:

Tie and Dye is a traditional Rajasthani craft most prevalent in Churu and Bikaner districts. So far, this craft has largely been restricted to the city centers. It has been practiced for generations. The craft needed innovation in material, organic dyes, and a fresh perspective on the motifs and the application product. It has a huge potential as a livelihood craft for rural communities.



### Stitching and Tailoring:

Stitching and tailoring have always been an essential area to focus upon. There is community youth who learn to tailor and earn a good income. There was a good demand from the community to scale it up. It was also the need of various groups across different crafts



### Applique:

Applique is another craft of the refugee community that needed scaling up. There is a huge and growing market for applique. Sadly, the artisans in Bikaner, Barmer and Jodhpur districts have not had any previous opportunities to improve their skills or integrate with the larger markets. This program was a big opportunity for applique craftspersons to advance their work and find bigger markets.



### Weaving:

Weaver groups of traditional weavers who have been doing weaving on their traditional pit looms were also included in the program. Earlier they used to weave woolen shawls but according to the new market demand they shifted to cotton. They have also changed their products from pattu ( men's' shawl ) to apparel and home furnishings.



# THE INTERVENTION SUMMARY

The project had the key mandate of the rejuvenating artisans pool, vitalizing the desert craft value chain, and its institutions. This was achieved by a series of tailored activities in the areas of capabilities, technology improvement, infrastructure upgrades, mentoring to crafts leaders, and market exposure opportunities. The initiative aimed at addressing the multifaceted needs of artisans coming from different socio-cultural backgrounds. The aim was to attain well-structured collaborative exercises amongst the artisans. Through diverse forms of training the

oldest and most skilled embroidery artisans will be able to impart their knowledge to the new and budding young artisans.

The program largely focused on crafts in three districts of Rajasthan - Bikaner, Sri Ganganagar, and Jodhpur. It worked with artisans in remote villages of all these districts by mapping new talented artisans to upgrade their artistic and entrepreneurial skills. The program also worked with practicing artisans to enhance their finesse, eventually enhancing their income levels.

## Interventions in the Programmes Were Broadly Designed in the Following Verticals



## The Participants

The artisans'-based skill-building intervention reached out to skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled women of the communities practicing traditional crafts. It enabled them to develop sustainable craft-based business enterprises for generating dignified livelihood in the crafts sector. Artisans based skill-building program was organized for the traditional artisans who were

left out of mainstream development. Traditional manufacturing skills are highest in the caste groups presently classified as Other Backward Classes, followed by Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, and other caste groups. The beneficiaries of the program were practicing and newly identified artisans between the age group 18-55 from the recognized districts.





**Photo Info:**

**Above/**

- 1/ Colour matching process
- 2/ Computer training at Bajju

- 3/ Artisan's participation at Dastkar Nature Bazaar
- 4/ Pattern making for apparels
- 5/ Pattern making for apparels at Bajju

## **CAPABILITIES: ENABLING CRAFT ECOSYSTEM THROUGH A SERIES OF CAPABILITIES INTERVENTIONS**

### **Mapping:**

Through a detailed process of identification, peer review and recommendation - artisans were mapped in the program area. Similarly, the focus villages or clusters were also mapped at the project steering committee level, basis the potential or prevalence of the craft.

### **Skilling:**

Village-level training programs were organized for untrained artisans. The focus was on craft specific - block printing, applique, embroidery, tie and dye, and natural dyeing. The aim was to introduce the crafts to artisans and facilitate them to pick one to excel in.

### **Up-Skilling:**

To enhance the skills of the practicing artisans, up-skilling training programs were organized for weaving and embroidery artisans.

### **Business Development:**

Artisans needed not only to be producers but they could aim to grow to be craft managers too. This was a key thought in designing enterprise management training as an intervention of the program. Several practicing artisans and community youth were identified and trained to craft enterprise manager.

### **Digital & ICT:**

A new initiative in the second year onwards, was also to impart digital/ICT education to the youth amongst the crafts community. This vertical was visualized to help future artisans or crafts managers to connect with larger crafts fraternity through technology and also be able to access the wider knowledge. The mid-term agenda is to gradually incorporate technology-based value chain management.

### **Designing, Sampling & Product Development:**

A series of training were organized focusing on aspects of all stages of product development starting with product designing to sample development. The pieces of training focused on color matrix, quality, sizing, newer market trends, and compliance. To ensure the qualitative improvement of all products was the primary goal. This was enabled through the promotion of master crafts-persons from the larger pool.

### **Marketing:**

The project also looked at promoting rural marketing and grooming communities to find larger rural markets for crafts. We organized training for young talented artisans who were able to manage online and offline marketing, social media, basic documentation and overall management of the business systems.

## **IMPROVING MARKET ACCESS STRATEGIC - COMPACTS, EXPOSURE VISITS:**

Improving the market linkages for both inward and outward business i.e. quality raw material procurement and better product positioning has been a thrust area for the program management team. Several new partnerships are forged towards achieving this. URMUL is now working with Okhal (a social enterprise) in a 'design to product' delivery arrangement. There is a visible improvement in the material procurement for the value chain. This is enabling a leap jump in the quality of the product. Several long-term technical partnerships with institutions like Desert Resource Centre, and ISeed (IRMA) have facilitated support. Their aid included knowledge transfer, technical support, and mentoring of the value chain leaders. Mentoring sessions and training were organized and the feedback from participants has been very encouraging. Over the three years, the program team and artisans were sent for learning visits to other value chains and



organizations working with other crafts in different parts. Artisans attended numerous B2B & B2C marketing exhibitions in major cities - Mumbai, New Delhi, Bangalore. Over 12 such learning trips were organized. All these turned out to be very insightful and impactful interventions for both the institutions and the artisans.

## TECHNOLOGY UP-GRADATION:

During the last three years, the program team actively pursued technology up-gradation in three areas - power reliability for manufacturing, better computing for enterprise management and tools upgrade for the value chain. Resources were mobilized either through the Skills to Succeed program or through the convergence of other programs to upgrade the infrastructure. The stitching unit at Bajju facility was completely revamped with power-efficient latest sewing machines and other tools. A solar microgrid was installed to provide an uninterrupted power supply to the production unit. To improve the digital infrastructure for the value chain, new computers were granted by Desert Resource Centre (technical partner of the program), DRC is

also developing a customized Enterprise Resource Planning system for the crafts enterprise pro bono. These interventions have catalyzed the enterprise-grade processes and also improved the efficiency of human resources.

## ENHANCEMENT OF EXISTING VALUE CHAINS:

Already active clusters including the internationally renowned Dandkala embroidery cluster were provided consolidation and enhancement support to not only improve the outcome of the cluster but also add more artisans from amongst the youth. Design and sampling trainings, infrastructure upgrade, exposure visits for the artisans from these clusters, digital literacy, production interactions with renowned designers were some of the highlights of the focus interventions. The result of these has been very encouraging. Artisans' income improved alongside the quality of the production. A new set of artisans, mostly youth of the community also engaged with the network. Cluster consolidation was a major outcome of the activities carried out in embroidery cluster.









## CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT:

Many new clusters focusing on the specific craft were incepted to widen the crafts-based livelihood opportunities for desert communities. Cluster development intervention covered activities including infrastructure support, capabilities enhancement, identification of cluster leader, and mentoring leaders. Through these inception activities, cluster-based artisans were mobilized; Some were slowly picking up while some have shown great results already, finding excellent market-product fit. Five new clusters have come together in different parts of the program area. Artisans identification, skill

enhancement training, market linkages, tools enhancements are key verticals in which initial work has been done. Regular mentoring of artisans is a continuous process. These clusters include:

- Tie-dye in Gadiyala, Nal, Chandasar villages.
- Applique cluster in Jodhasar, Gokul & Bajju villages.
- Upcycling or waste weaving cluster in Dantaur, 29 ASB, Gharsana. Additional funding support to set up a full scale upcycling unit has also been set up.
- Crochet & macrame cluster in Rawatsar, Kolasar, 29 DWD villages.
- Beedball cluster in Dandkala, Bandhali, Gokul villages.



*Photo info:*

*Right/*

- 1/ Natural dying through marigold flower at Bajju
- 2/ Applique training conducted at Jodhasar
- 3/ Waste weaving training at Bajju
- 4/ Crochet training at Gharsana

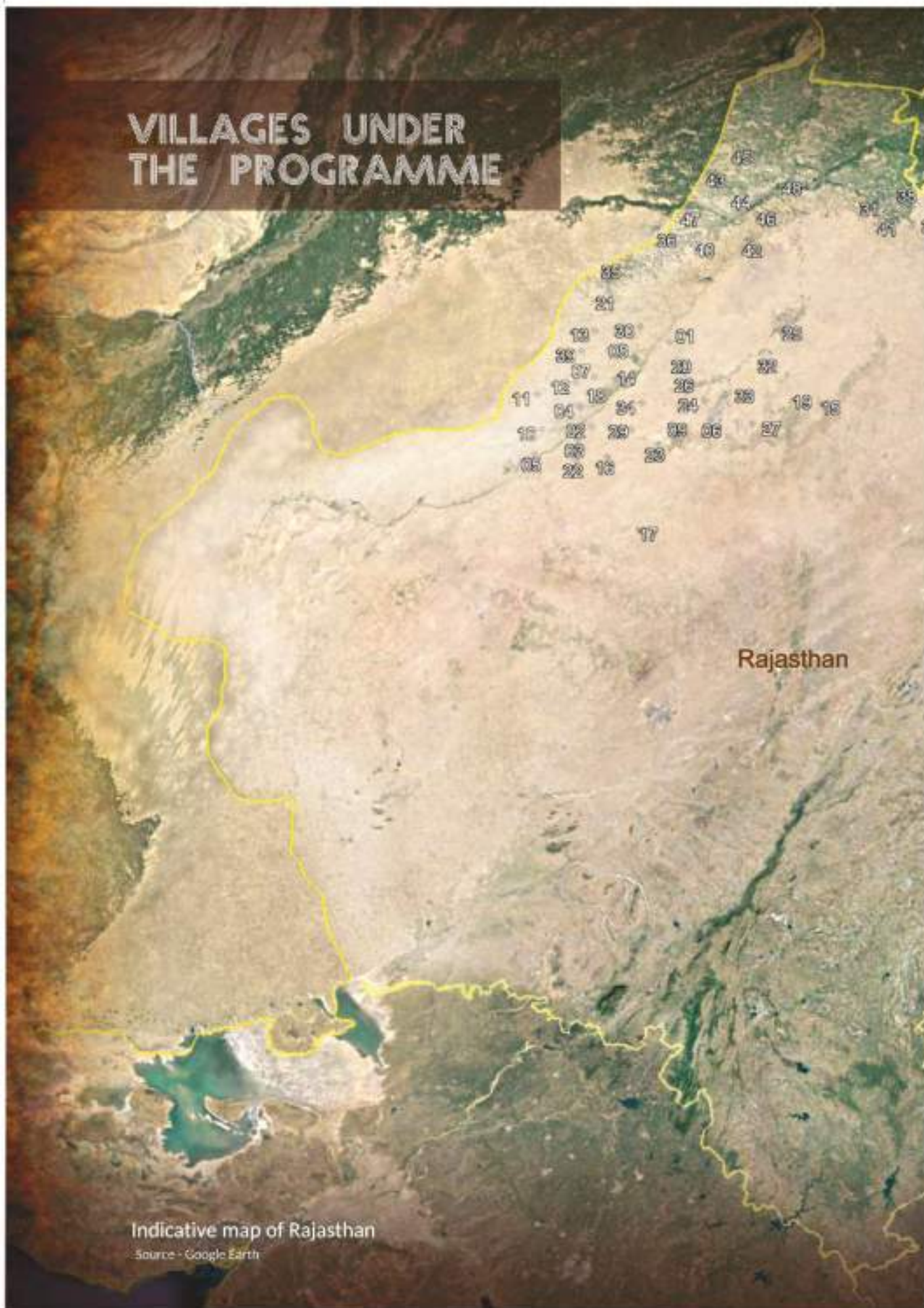
5/ Crochet training at Rawatsar

*Above Left/*

- 1/ Market exposure visit at an exhibition in Delhi



# VILLAGES UNDER THE PROGRAMME



Rajasthan

Indicative map of Rajasthan

Source - Google Earth



uttarakhand

Delhi

Location of the initiative was Bajju village of Bikaner district, Rajasthan. Training programmes were conducted in different villages of Bikaner. These training programme consist of Stitching, Weaving, Applique, Embroidery, Tie and Dye, Block Printing, Natural Dying, Mukka Embroidery, Ceramics & Crochet, and Business Management

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 01. Aduri        | 26. Nal           |
| 02. Bajju        | 27. Napasar       |
| 03. Bajju Khalsa | 28. Parvati Talai |
| 04. Bandhli      | 29. Pabusar       |
| 05. Bikampur     | 29. Pugal         |
| 06. Bikaner      | 30. Rawatsar      |
| 07. Bhaluri      | 31. Runiya        |
| 08. Shivnagar    | Barawas           |
| 09. Chandasar    | 32. Shastri Nagar |
| 10. Charanwala   | 33. Surjara       |
| 11. Cheela       | 34. 1 BD          |
| Kashmeer         | 35. 3 STR         |
| 12. Dandkalan    | 36. 4 KWM         |
| 13. Dantaur      | 37. 19 Ward       |
| 14. Deli Talai   | 38. 26 BLD        |
| 15. Dungargarh   | 39. 29 ASB (New   |
| 16. Ghadiyala    | Mandi             |
| 17. Ghantiyail   | Gharsana)         |
| 18. Gokal        | 40. 29 DWD        |
| 19. Jodhasar     | 41. 2 DO          |
| 20. Kawni        | 42. 2 AD          |
| 21. Khajuwala    | 43. 6 AD          |
| 22. Kolasar      | 44. 7 AD          |
| 23. Kolayat      | 45. 8 AD          |
| 24. Lakhasar     | 46. 9 AD          |
| 25. Lunkaransar  | 47. 14 AD         |

— Rajasthan State Boundary


01 Village




# TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The program in a phased approach has aimed at making these artisans economically, creatively and infrastructure-wise self-reliant. Every year we have witnessed a positive response to our interventions in the targeted areas.


2015-16



2018-19




Apart from reaching out to a larger number of new women artisans, skill development support was also provided to the more experienced ones. The artisans were beginning to gain confidence to understand new market design trends and build their products accordingly. They were also supported with materials such as sewing machines. URMUL ensured that the women got all the creative, infrastructural and institutional support they felt they needed.



The artisans were encouraged to collaborate together and organize themselves in formal groups. The digital literacy trainings made them understand on how they could leverage technology to their benefit. The regular business exposure trips helped these women to understand the market and create linkages.







The program initially focusing on encouraging new artisans to learn the skills. The experienced artisans were included so that they could build on their existent skills and ensure their products are market-ready. During the entire year, there was focus to increase the production as well as ensure that the quality is not compromised. The artisans were boosted to develop their new creative designs.

2016-17

In this stage, there was a special emphasis laid on reaching out to an exponential population of women artisans. New crafts were introduced so that women were able expand their skills. These artisans were able to offer a broad range of products and thus effectively contribute to their family income. The entrepreneurship visits also helped them pick up foundational business and leadership skills. The artisans were also taught to be more careful about the finishing of their products so that their products could be seamlessly shared with the buyers.

2017-18

2019-20

The program in its current phase is connecting the artisans with the government schemes that are in place. These artisans have also been encouraged to interact with the private players and independently take their orders. They have also been supported to develop new products.

# THE PROJECT LEARNING

- ◇ To enhance the capacity building of the artisans and the quality as well as quantity of the Kashida embroidered apparel, it is essential to engage the new artisans and bring together the older and experienced artisans with the younger ones.
- ◇ Clubbing the craftsmanship with formal education and training is also needed to move beyond the traditional ways, it is very beneficial for the younger artisans.
- ◇ Increasing collaboration with local institutions organizations such as the gram panchayat is essential to incorporate the artisan's work as part of a livelihood program.
- ◇ Developing a robust network of marketing, training, inventory management and quality networking for a more systematic approach and execution of the different programs is essential
- ◇ Documentation of different programs, workshops, training and most importantly the craftsmanship is very crucial and should be done according to a consistent cycle.
- ◇ The craftsmanship, inquisitiveness, and determination can be encouraged in exploring the wider platforms of the industry.
- ◇ It is also necessary to encourage the next generation to take up this craft. Ensuring them to be prepared for the next level by making the program more aspirational would ensure their stand in the market.
- ◇ To make the systems more sustainable, we have given the baton in the hands of the local women artisans or identified local people who can help them develop a system or organization of their own. However, this process has to be closely monitored since the local people tend to start acting like middlemen and start exploiting the women from their villages.
- ◇ It is important to understand that if given the right direction, and opportunity, the artisans are capable of developing their designs, which could find a good market as well. For instance, post-learning the basics in stitching training, the artisans of Napasar were able to develop their designs of coasters and small pouches.
- ◇ Increasing the market exposure for artisans by helping them travel to bigger cities and exhibitions in Delhi, Bangalore, etc. helps them connect and understand market requirements, they also got new design ideas as well. For instance, once the artisans from Dandkala and Ghantiyali visited the market and the finishing of their products was considerably improved.
- ◇ It was big learning to institutionalize the craft and encourage center-based work culture. It essential to get the support of all the stakeholders of the community as well.
- ◇ Crafts can be a major source of encouragement for the disabled community directly or indirectly. Crafts can replace other methods of livelihood such as daily-wage labor work and also save the women from potential harassment in the process. For instance, the women from village Kavni currently working in hazardous conditions in mines wish to immediately switch to craft as a source of income.
- ◇ Introducing new interactive techniques, exposure visits and also new technology in their craft adds new zest to learning. It improves the productivity of the artisans.
- ◇ Exposing them to the work of artisans of other areas of the country again increases their competitiveness and gives them new ideas to experiment.
- ◇ Increasing collaboration with financial organizations such as the local banks is extremely essential to help them manage their financials better and gain new capital.



◇ To develop village-based centers, our teams are taking help from local sarpanches who in some villages have allotted the local village centers. Hence the ownership of the community over the centers' increases.

◇ Systems need to be created so that it becomes necessary for educated girls or women to take charge of the village groups. Education has to be promoted within the community. However, this is going to be a gradual and time taking process.



**Photo Info:**

Above /

1/ Applique training at Shivnagar  
2/ Embroidery training conducted at Dandkala

3/ Tie-dye training in Naal

4/ Training Product displayed at Bajju

5/ Embroidery training at 7AD

6/ Waste weaving training at Dantor

# PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

## a) Product Marketing and Artisans' Database:

Products prepared by new artisans were exhibited for sale at handicraft markets in New Delhi, Bikaner, Bangalore, Chennai, and Jaipur. Exhibitions were also conducted at the corporate offices of MNCs including Accenture and Aon in Gurugram. Also, the database of the newly trained and practicing artisans has been prepared. This is a critical step in developing future-ready inventory management and e-commerce platforms of the product.

## b) New Product Development by Artisans:

The team also developed new samples in all product range - apparel and artisans for women, men, and kids, etc.

## c) Enterprise Development:

URMUL has helped in facilitating loans for the artisans of Ghantiyali village for the purchase of new machinery and setting up an independent unit at the village level itself. With the support of the CAF India and Accenture project, URMUL was able to introduce new-age machinery at a tailoring unit in village Bajju. This resulted to get them at par with industry standards and start receiving more orders. Artisans of Napasar village have also started receiving independent orders and have started functioning as a unit. URMUL has constantly handheld them in the process of developing market links and start getting work directly. Three of the villages that received training under the Accenture project have started working independently - 2AD, 2DO, and Dandkala. They have also received orders from other sources. Artisans of Deli Talai have also been linked with government schemes to help them open their shop in their village. In a first-of-its-kind experience, one of the village trainers Rukasana at

the Bajju stitching training received so much encouragement that she has started her school in the village and has set-up almost 80 machines to further teach the girls of nearby villages as well.

## d) Increasing Production Footprint:

In one of the oldest villages, the artisans have registered a small organization on their own - Shri Sai Enterprise. And have started receiving work from organizations. Due to new designs developed in the product development training, artisans from Deli Talai, 2DO, 8AD and 9AD were able to get 3 orders from Okhai and 1 order from the designer Ritu Agnihotri. Both orders were worth INR. 15 lacs approximately. Also, through a training program on weaving, a completely new range of products using waste fabric could be established in Bajju village and the artisans have already received an order of 40 durries from Rangсутra. The weavers' clusters in Napasar developed a completely new range of handwoven stoles and have already received an order from URMUL IGP for 50 stoles and sarees. Efforts are being made to get them more business. A range of paper bags with block printing was also developed during the project. In crochet training, products such as baskets and wall hangings were developed.

## e) Centre Development:

Out of these 5 centers that were initiated during the project, 2 centers - 2AD and Dandkala, have been approved as IKEA centers and have recently received an order worth INR 15 lac. The other 2 centers - Gokul and Deli Talai have managed to receive orders worth INR 7 lacs from Okhai. The centers in Chandasar and 7AD have recently received assistance from their respective sarpanches and are in the setting up phase. This is quite encouraging as sarpanch does not usually help with resources.



#### f) Independent Marketing:

Two separate groups including artisans and internal team members were also taken to Delhi and Bangalore for exposure visits to help them understand the market scenario better and

expand their horizon of design and thought. Artisans cards of almost 150 artisans have already been initiated with the help of URMUL and the remaining are in the process. This would ensure that they are linked with government schemes and marketing networks.



#### Photo info:

Above/  
1/ Tailor unit at Bajju

2/ Exhibition at Cause for a call conducted at Hyatt pune  
3/ Artisan exposure trip to Ahmedabad  
4/ Product shoot at Delhi

# IMPACT OF THE TRAINING PROGRAMME

The impact of training programs has been captured through continuous feedback sessions, observations, FGDs and open-ended checklists. Individual cases have also been developed to document the training impact in creating change in the lives of individual artisans. The following points present overall program impact:

- ◆ The diverse training workshops had positive feedback and the participants felt that they were also able to connect in many ways during sessions of learning, techniques of production, marketing, etc.
- ◆ Many amongst the women participants look forward to seeking opportunities in the mainstream market not just in terms of employment but overall mobility. However, the most impactful factor hindering their rights and abilities was the presence of a patriarchal mindset. This needs to be addressed at a wider scale.
- ◆ The participating women also got a wide exposure by being part of sessions and camps on health, hygiene, social inclusion and confidence building.
- ◆ The artisans felt that such training is a very useful platform for developing and strengthening embroidery skills. Apart from the professionals from the design and trade industry, the artisans enjoyed learning from the more experienced artisans from their community.
- ◆ The budding artisans felt that such training can further be utilized as a platform for developing and strengthening their skills essential to empower them in ways beyond imagination. For instance, the basic act of stepping out of the confined walls has been a big stimulus for these artisans. In the course of economic deprivation and conservative mindset, they have been able to utilize their skills as a means of supporting themselves and their families.







- ◆ One of the biggest impacts of this program has been opening the window of possibilities for the artisans as well as the market. Artisans in newly identified villages that had to date not been known to practice crafts in any form have started taking this up. These training have resulted in an increase in income in many new villages such as Jodhasar, Gokul, Naal, and other new villages.
- ◆ Many people in the new villages who were not even interested in the possibility of earning a livelihood through craft have at least started taking note. They have even started appreciating and motivating their women to go ahead.
- ◆ Once the word spread, women from other villages, near and far, started inviting our teams to conduct training in their villages. Some even traveled as far from Sri Ganganagar to Bajju to ask to initiate training in their areas.
- ◆ The training programs could sensitize participants to break the existing caste barriers among various artisan groups.
- ◆ The program enhanced the confidence of women artisans. The women were confident to able to earn a dignified livelihood through their craft. This was received well in the villages.
- ◆ Even for the implementing team, the training programs provided them an opportunity to see their crafts through new angles and lenses. For example, in weaving training, the team not only developed new weaving samples in the conventional craft but also started a complete new range of weaving which included waste material weaving. This opened a very new set of the product range in the market.

**Photo info:**

*Below Left/*

- 1/ Embroidery training at Ramra
- 2/ Stitching training conducted by Usha stitching school at Bajju

*Above Right/*

- 3/ Product development training at Bandhall
- 4/ Product development training at Bhaluri

# PROJECT CHALLENGES

Challenges of the project are as follows:

- ◆ Bringing together 1340 artisans from different age groups and socio-cultural and economic backgrounds for regular trainings and capacity building exercises was a great challenge.
- ◆ Initiating and promoting learning beyond the traditional and inherited Kashida art among women especially exposing them to newer designs, techniques, and colors was quite challenging.
- ◆ Increasing the skills as well as the income of the artisans by supporting them at multiple levels such as production, marketing, and communication was slightly challenging.
- ◆ Tackling the patriarchal and conservative mindset needs to be addressed.
- ◆ There was a lack of centralized units for artisans to come together and start functioning as an organization. This also has a very big impact on the quality of production of these artisans resulting in increasing losses due to rejections from producers.
- ◆ The raw material is not easily available to the artisans to start productions on their own.
- ◆ Post-implementation of GST, maintaining liquidity and working with artisans has become extremely challenging since most of the artisans in the craft sector are unregistered or do not have the resources to function on a GST number.
- ◆ Institutionalization and commercialization of home-based crafts are extremely difficult since it requires a major attitudinal change of the women as well as the community.
- ◆ Increasing the income of women remains a big challenge. These women usually work for less than 8 hours a day. At times they tend to manage productions in the spare time in-between or after their daily household chores. This makes the institutionalization and ensuring an 8-hour work schedule extremely difficult.
- ◆ Developing entrepreneurial thought while grappling high illiteracy in the region was a major challenge.
- ◆ Getting more orders and connecting the artisans directly with the market remains a problem. It makes increasing the incomes of the artisans regularly a big challenge.
- ◆ Training is one part of the overall business development and building the rest of the supply chain takes a lot more time and effort and hence turns out to be a slow process.
- ◆ The newly introduced crafts – applique, tie-dye, block-printing, and natural dyeing are yet to get established in terms of processes and marketing.
- ◆ The marketing of products takes a longer time, sometimes more than 6 months to bear fruits.
- ◆ Marketing of products takes a longer time, sometimes more than 6 months to bear fruit
- ◆ Finding work for tie-dye artisans is proving to be a bit difficult. Their quality of work is slightly less than the competitors in the market hailing from Churu and Sujangarh.
- ◆ Some of the artisan groups have come together to form village-based production centers (overcoming the attitudinal barrier). However, due to lack of resources, it becomes a challenge to find places within the villages that are community spaces and also easily accessible for the women artisans.







## Ms. Purna Agarwal

project coordinator

The Accenture funded Skills to Succeed program was my entry point into the organization. I had shifted from the field of advertising to the development sector. It was to explore the possibilities of using marketing and communication skills for improving the livelihoods of the rural communities. This program had three important aspects to it - training new artisans in traditional crafts, developing new product range for the existing artisan base and organizing the artisan clusters in enterprises. Working on these aspects gave me a solid foundation. It enabled a seamless entry for me into the community and this line of work. In many of the villages, our team conducted training. The commute was extremely difficult and long and hence we had to stay with the communities for 7 to 15 days. Many of them didn't even have basic toilets and we had to go for open defecation. In some places, even the water was of poor quality and gave us stomach aches. Most difficult months were during the summers where it was simply boiling. All of these issues gave us an insight into their realities and how the women could adapt to our training. The thought that these skills as a possible way to improve the lives of communities, gave us a solid conviction towards the work.

Interestingly, even the outlook of our team members changed. For instance, our field workers such as Laxmi and Santosh while attending the training workshops got interested in various crafts and learned the basics. Santosh has today become an amateur dyer (and a photographer) herself. Laxmi enjoyed the computer training so much that she learned how to operate a computer. She even bought a laptop for herself and today is doing all the data entry for Accenture reports. Moti has learned applique himself and has started getting interested in designing.

For me, even if 3 women pick up a craft from a batch of 30 and start practicing it, I consider it a success. After all, it took us 15 years complete our formal education. It would be unfair to expect a 15 days long training to convert everyone into an entrepreneur.



## Ms. Shwetambra Ujjain

marketing executive/  
textile designer

I never imagined that my first job would be to work directly with the artisans. I always thought that I would be working under a designer. But as my destiny would have it, I landed up as a designer and marketing executive with URMUL Seemant Samiti. I studied at the School of Fashion Technology. I gained skills as a designer and marketing executive. My first place of work brought me to a remote village campus in the middle of the Thar desert, 100 km away from the city of Bikaner, called Bajju.

Here were generations of weavers, dyers, and craftsmen for whom, the 'craft' was first an 'art' passed on to them lovingly by their grandparents and parents. The art gets transferred in various ways. For instance, I remember there were a few who learned this art simply because they were best friends with the girl whose grandmother taught her how to make the top. It was very endearing to know these people and understand their stories. Initially, for me, it was very tough to work with artisans because I was not able to understand their language. There was a barrier in communication. But gradually we were able to connect well and work collaboratively together. I was further able to build strong bonds with them.



# PROJECT TEAM EXPERIENCES



**Ms. Siddhi Rade**  
design consultant

After finishing my graduation, getting a job where I enjoyed my internship was a dream come true for me. I am currently working with URMUL Seemant Samiti (IGP). I work as a Jr. Design Consultant in the team. I chose this job as I always wanted to work with artisans and wanted to understand their daily struggles and challenges. As an urban kid, I have always been pampered by my parents and lived in a cushioned environment. But, life here in villages is extremely challenging. This job allows me to look forward to the daily challenges life throws at me.

As a part of the Accenture program, I got to travel to the villages along with my team. We conducted training related to embroidery, applique, tie-dye, block print, bead ball, etc. I felt training artisans made me more patient and directional. Artisans here are very skilled. I enjoyed shaping their craft according to market trends and needs.



**Mrs. Santosh Tank**  
senior trainer

In 2017, I joined the Accenture project team. Natural dyeing, block print, macramé, and crochet have always been my favorite training throughout my journey. I ensured the quality of the desired product. During this program, I have trained many artisans and have witnessed them setting up their own small-scale business. It has been a beautiful journey.



**Mrs. Laxmi Rani**  
senior trainer

I have been part of the Accenture project since 2017. I have conducted many pieces of training in villages on tie-dye, block print, crochet, embroidery, bead ball, weaving, applique, and stitching. In total, I have given my training inputs in 18 villages and trained close to 800 women artisans. I am extremely happy to be part of the Accenture project and impart my learnings to so many women.



**Mr. Hema Ram**  
production manager

In 2004 I joined Urmul Seemant Samiti (IGP) as a tailor. I took up this job to support my family financially. As a part of Accenture project, I got an opportunity to be the production manager and get an experience of working with almost 6000 people and be a part of training programs conducted for the artisans.



## Against the ODDS



**D**ecisions have never been easy for Kali. She has always been stopped from moving ahead in life; be it for education or learning a new skill. Kali Meghwal is the fourth amongst the total of six kids – four girls and two boys. With her two elder sisters married off as child brides and one next in line to do the same, Kali decided to fight her battle on her terms and chose education as her means to the response. This fourteen-year-old kid is in the tenth standard. In her village, Lakhisar, girls of her age are mostly school dropouts or have never attended any. Stringent caste-based discrimination still prevails in the village which does not easily let children from the lower castes study in schools believed to be meant for children of upper castes. But Kali has not only rebelled and convinced everyone in her family but also in the neighborhood to ensure education for all.

URMUL reached her village in the summer of 2017, with its artisan training program. It was an opportunity that could change Kali's course of life - she knew this and availed it to the fullest! She enrolled in the training and found another opportunity to attain knowledge and self-reliance. Though she was repeatedly discouraged to attend the training even by her peers she did not shy away. During her summer vacations, she overcame all the odds to reach the training center every day to hone her tie-dye skills. She believes, all that all she learns here will open up channels for her to be financially independent. Kali says, "I don't want to get married off early like my sister's. I want to achieve something in life so that everyone looks up to me. I think this training is an opportunity for me to get there. I can set up some business of my own if I properly learn here." Her trainer, Amrit suggests, Kali has learned tie-dye very rapidly and, in the future, she could be a very good artist for the same.

Every year, her father hopes for good rains for his farm yield to suffice his family's food needs and her mother struggles to manage the necessities within the available. Witnessing their struggles throughout, she wants to contribute to the family and better their lives along with her own. Kali is determined to learn further and mark her way. URMUL and Accenture are helping her achieve this dream.

## REDEFINING Boundaries



**T**aari Bai frowns through her spectacles, as she tries to thread the needle. Embroidery is second nature to her, despite having difficulty in seeing the thread. "I don't remember", is her response when asked about her age. She does remember crossing into India from Pakistan during the 1971 Indo-Pak war. After getting married, Taari Bai had 3 sons. Two of her sons passed away soon after her husband's death. This meant that none of the earning members of the household were alive. This put Taari Bai in a precarious situation and she was left completely helpless.

Not the one to give up, she took the responsibility of taking care of herself and her only child alive by working in the fields and refining her art of embroidery to earn a living.

During this phase of her life, she found herself with the opportunity of learning Kashida with URMUL and exploring the possibility of added income to help her get by. She took up the opportunity and has now been associated with URMUL for more than 15 years. Her son is a farmer and has also opened up a general store. Taari Bai has skilled up her work over the years and now is a major worker with URMUL. She has also been able to inspire her daughter-in-law to learn embroidery and she helps her out with the work.



## Uplifting the **SOCIETY**



### Bhanwari Devi, Village Napasar

**N**apasar is a village not very far from Bikaner. It is also a hub for weaving and attracts people from all around the city. However, the situation of women in the community was not very uplifted. They would constantly strive to carve an identity of their own by making small beed patches for the local shopkeepers or middlemen. However, this work did not help them earn a respectable living. The middlemen would constantly fleece them and they would end up earning only Rs. 10-15 for a patch with the work of 5-7 days.

This was the very reason Bhanwari Devi took matters in her hands and approached the nearest URMUL unit to find some respectable work at home. She participated in the stitching training and along with her friends started taking small orders from the URMUL unit as well as outside. Earning a respectable sum has helped her gain confidence in her work. She has also helped her to show the other women of the group that they could earn a respectable income while staying at home as well.

**T**har is a place of lesser opportunities. This land of deprivation seldom gives hope to its inhabitants. In a place, such Ruksana is fighting for her identity and working to uplift the lives of other women in her village Bajju. She divorced her husband for want of this identity that he couldn't give her. Highly educated for a woman to be in the village Ruksana got her masters and a teaching degree. She is a trained tailor who is helping URMUL teach this skill to the other women in the community so they don't have to be dependent and suffer the troubles she had gone through.

Ruksana teaches this art to other women in the training organized by URMUL. She is one inspiring woman in the community who is determined to bring change to everyone's life. She is thankful to URMUL for giving her a platform for this purpose. She is partnering hope into action in the lives of the women she is training. As much as she lays stress on learning stitching, Ruksana also inspires girls to complete their education. She understands and explains to them the change education can bring to their life. Ruksana and URMUL's training are symbiotically benefitting the women in the community and uplifting them. Thanks to the efforts from both sides, women here are finding a new meaning to their lives through this and an opportunity to stand on their own feet.

### A new **RAY** of **HOPE**



**S**ukhi from village Kavri spent her better years loading mud on her head at construction sites. It was never easy for her to earn her living. Though not the ideal job for any woman to do she could buy afford food for herself and her family. But the panchayat banned this source of income for women in the village. For a woman her age, it was too tough to start anything new. Just as she was about to leave all hopes URMUL reached her village with its tie and dye training.

The training gave a new dimension to her life. She had something new to learn, something new to hope for. Her hands too rough from loading mud were now weaving a new tale where she could believe to do something better with her life from learning this new skill. Sukhi put in all her efforts to learn the intricacies of the art form so she could make a living out of it. URMUL supported the women in her village where all were going through the same troubles as Sukhi. Today she is confident about herself and thankful that the training gave her a new approach and an opportunity to be independent again.



## SHINING through the DARKNESS



**U**nder the roof of a small house in Kawni, Rajasthan lives an extraordinary young woman with talents that can leave people awestruck after they find out about her disabilities. Meherbano was born mute and deaf to a driver father and a tailor mother. They were earning minimum wages and supported her 3 brothers of which 2 were suffering from the same condition as her. This could not stop Meherbano from learning to dream and making things better for her. She learned to stitch to help her mother while earning extra income to support her family financially. Through all her struggles she refused to back down from any challenge she faced and tackled each of them head-on. After learning about the training by URMUL she found yet another opportunity to add to her skills. She learned the art of tie and dye with the hopes that someday all her hard work will pay off in the end.

She works with unparalleled enthusiasm that has not been witnessed in anyone. The training has uplifted her spirits and gave her a new opportunity to learn and grow in life.

## HANGING by a MOMENT



**G**iving up and not doing anything is not an option for Shanti Devi as she struggles every day to make ends meet. After a series of unfortunate events involving one of her sons dying in an accident and her husband leaving her for another woman, she has taken it upon herself to provide for her other son and herself. She lives with her elder sister's family as she has had no money to pay for her own house. With no support from anyone and her son's responsibility completely on her shoulders, Shanti works hard and learned to stitch in fifteen days of training by URMUL in her village Bajju.

Ever since she joined the URMUL training center at Bajju, she has shown great skill and an urge to learn and work better. She aims to expand her knowledge of the subject. She hopes to be able to become self-sufficient in the future and make a proper living out of these skills she learned in the training.

## To her ARTISTIC SELF

**F**ifteen days of training at Nosariya introduced Icharaj to her artistic side like never before. Icharaj, a 43-year-old woman who lives with her 2 daughters and husband in their small village, said that she had never been a part of any such kind of training before where she could explore and discover her abilities. Although she was always inclined to learn some crafts, she never thought it could provide livelihood as well.

"My exposure has been limited to my household only. Being uneducated I couldn't earn for myself. With URMUL conducting this tie-and-dye training in our village, not only have I learned the craft but I'm now an ambassador of this work. I'm also confident to earn well from it." Icharaj attended the 15-day training of tie and dye and has excelled in tying fabrics in multiple ways.

## The Driving Force

**D**istance was no bar for Baby Kanwar to stop her reach the training center after walking 3kms under the hot sun of April. Baby Kanwar, a 40-year-old woman came to attend the 15 day tie and dye training at village Nosariya in order to learn the technique of tying. She said she always wanted to learn this but wasn't allowed to move out of village. When she heard of Urmul conducting the training near her own village she was more than happy and decided to walk 3kms to the training centre. Baby was given grade-A for her performance in the training and is working on her first order already.





## All by HERSELF

Unlike most other women who depend on their husbands for all their needs, Kaushalya always took her and her daughter's responsibility. She never banked upon anyone for help. Living with her unemployed husband for three years, she is the only earning member of the family. An Anganwadi helper in the village of Lakhusar, she earns a meager sum of INR 2500/- per month, barely enough to take care of her family and to cater to the needs of her eight months old daughter, Guddi.

Kaushalya got to know about the crafts training that was about to begin in the Anganwadi center, she did not think twice inculcating this new skill in her life that can help her do better for her family. Kaushalya approached the field team at URMUL and got enrolled. For the fifteen days of training, soon after completing her household chores and Anganwadi work, she would join the other women in training. She understood that this could give her the chance to not just learn something altogether new, but also better her prospects of a better future. Mother to two daughters, she believed in the possibility of being able to raise her kids well through this training. Already an inspiration to the other girls in the village for not being dependent on her husband, a few other girls were encouraged to join the training because of her persistence.

She says with a smile, "I will never let my daughters face any trouble. It's only for them that I'm coming here to learn tie and dye. I think all women should work the same way." She found hope in this training the same way her daughters find it in her.

Every community has this one person all look up to for their joys and grievances. Gayatri is that go-to person in her village, Lakhusar. She is known for her wise decisions and advice. Gayatri is highly respected in the village for her wisdom. She is an Asha worker in the village Anganwadi, while her husband sells fried snacks on the side of the highway.

Mother to two daughters and a son, Gayatri sent her kids to Kolkata for higher studies. In this village where education is a distant priority, Gayatri's kids are exemplary especially her son, who got a scholarship from the university for his master's degree. Everyone gives her credit for this, but life was not easy for her.

She went through several rough ups and downs in her journey but came out of it all successfully and cheerfully narrates it all. Ever since the training got scheduled in her village, she was greatly enthusiastic about it happening. She went around contacting women in the community and encouraged them to join the training. She found it a great opportunity not just for herself but also for other women in the community to become self-dependent. Never had Lakhusar been involved in any such activity where women would not just be taught a new skill, but also be empowered to earn and contribute to the family's income.

Gayatri coordinated the training throughout. She understood the importance it holds in transforming all their lives. She said, "women should always work to become self-dependent and opportunities such as this should be grabbed. I want the women of my village to become economically stable as they have been facing a lot of troubles."

The training encouraged her to lead in her village and anchor this change. Her efforts to the community will serve as a driving force to empower women and make sure that all of them have the opportunity to write their own success stories.

## Walking the Extra MILE

The mother of a handicapped child, Chhota has had a very difficult life after the death of her husband. With no education and no skills to help her survive and sustain. She was majorly dependent on her relatives for the day-to-day sustenance of her child. URMUL's 15-day training of Tie & Dye in her village Jhalwali allowed 47-year-old Chhota to acquire a skill. This would make her sustain on her own and provide her a dignified work. "I want to work for my son. I would have brought him if it was possible so that he could also learn something. But since he is blind-sighted, I came to learn and earn for my family.

## DRIVING the Community







## A Flight of **HOPE**

**S**aamu Bai was not always this brave; situations got her to become so. A Pakistani migrant of the 1971 war Saamu had experienced poverty and struggles in the Thar to a point where most would give up but she fought her way out. The art of Kashida ran in her family. She was no exception to it ever since her childhood. All she needed was an opportunity to finesse her art. URMUL helped her with this and now it's been 21 years of her association with the organization.

Saamu Bai, is from village 2AD and is presently working with 40 women in her village training them on the intricacies of the art. She trains them in Kashida and helps them earn a living. Her eagerness to learn had her step out of the house and travel across places like Goa, Hyderabad, Delhi, and Varanasi for up-scaling her art. She also had her first flight experience on the process. Saamu Bai never went to school, but today she maintains a register of all the women working with her in the village. She not only writes their details but also manages their accounts. She is an inspiration to the women in her village as she has shown them that hard work and commitment will get them the respect that they deserve. It would be a great means to add to the family income.

With her vast experience, Saamu Bai not only does Kashida but also helps in the designing process. Her journey began with URMUL's training and today she gives the organization all the credit for the tremendous support they extended over all the years.

## **Soni Devi,** Village Dantaur

**A**s a 38-year-old woman, Soni Devi lives in her family of 4 and earns a living by working as a daily wage worker in various odd construction sites and NREGA. However, she does not like to do the same work and wanted to do some other work. The challenge for her was how will she be able to send her kids to school and get them food. Soni Devi, attended tie-dye training organized by URMUL Trust and felt she could do something more creative. She felt she could utilize the skills she already knows to earn a decent living for herself. She feels she could even teach her kids to do the same. She wants to prepare them to earn a good living for themselves in the future. She wants to stay connected with the URMUL family.

## **Kesar Devi,** Village Pabusar

### **Mohini,**

Deli Talai, Bikaner

#### A National Award Winning Artisan

**M**ohini always wanted to go to school but her grandfather did not let her study after 7th grade. When her grandfather went to Pakistan for a year, she requested her mother to let her go to school and with the help of one of her uncle who was also a teacher she could attend school for one more year. Mohini was married at the age of 19 in a more conservative household. Her husband had no control over his earnings in the joint family and eventually they both separated to start a new and independent life. Mohini was already involved with URMUL when she left her in-laws house so it was the first door she knocked at for help. Both Mohini and her husband found work at URMUL with a place to stay and start a new life. Her husband Khangaram also did a computer course and got promoted at URMUL with a better pay scale.

In a few years, Mohini was able to not only perfect the art of Kashida but also learn to stitch, designing and train other women from her village. She has been contributing for 10 years now. She has constantly been motivating other women to participate in training workshops and other activities at URMUL. She is always excited to meet new people through such workshops and also adopt new designs in her work.

In the last 10 years, Mohini has been able to become self-sufficient and saved enough to build her own house. She has been traveling extensively to different cities for Kashida workshops and exhibitions. In 2013, she traveled to Mumbai to receive an award from Bollywood actress Priyanka Chopra and Indian Boxer Mary Kom. She has a 2 years old daughter. She wants her to get the best education and travel the world.



**K**esar Devi, is a disabled woman who has been disowned by her husband as well as her family. Maybe the main reason why she simply does not allow anyone to click her photograph. Completely dependent on her brother, she passes her time making small crochet items, which has eventually fine-tuned her skills. URMUL learned about her situation and saw the products she made and decided to make her a trainer for the village training. Seeing a ray of hope for her economic upliftment, she started working with the designer and started developing more products. A fighter spirit that she is, URMUL is trying to get a shop allotted to her to secure her future.

Where there is  
a **WILL** there  
is a **WAY**

**R**esham Bai grew up in a very small Bhaluri village of Rajasthan where her family has been living for ages. While growing up, she saw all village women sitting together after lunch and embroidered to pass time. Her grandmother would always tell her to learn embroidery otherwise no one would marry her. Hence, she started learning the traditional patterns while paying heed to her parents' advice in the sand dunes.

While it was a precedence that women were not supposed to talk much, but Resham Bai made the designs talk for her. They reflected her silent realizations, and wishes in life. However, then came an abrupt stop to her journey of colors. She got married and in her new home and village, no one embroidered their dreams and clothes. She started forgetting her traditional craft while working in the fields. The family struggled daily to manage her family's finances.

When URMUL came to conduct Appliqué skill development training for 15 days, it arose a slight curiosity in her. It utilized her traditional Kashida skills and mixed them with something new. It seemed interesting to her. The very first sample she made got her a lot of praise from her trainer. She was back to the realm which gave her peace and enjoyment. She loved the colors. She loved learning. Most importantly, this opportunity gave her the means to solve her financial problems as well as enjoy the work she was doing.

## Sushila, Village Rawatsar

**S**ushila is a strong-willed 25 years old woman who was married off by her family as soon as she turned 18. With dreams in her head, she got on the journey of her life along with her husband. However, difficult times awaited her. Due to internal family issues, her husband and she were driven out of their family home and they had to seek work. Facing extreme financial difficulty she decided to help her husband in running the house. But the question remained, how? She had learned the skills of macramé and crochet in her early years and she decided to put it to use. Her husband disapproved, but she defied him and sneaked out of the home to learn more. When her husband saw her products and their finesse, he also decided to help her and started taking her to government exhibitions. This brought her in contact with the URMUL team and they invited us to conduct crochet training in their village. She led the training and even went ahead for marketing with the team. She has started selling her products to URMUL as well now. Her products have been appreciated amongst other villages in Pugal.



**Rangoo Bai,**  
Village 2DO

**R**angoo Bai is an artisan introduced to URMUL during the Accenture training. She is a widow with 2 daughters. She was completely dependent on her brother for taking care of her and her daughter. She was identified as a class A artisan by URMUL team in one of the initial training organized in the village 2DO. What came as a pleasant surprise for everyone was that she turned out to be a fighter. Her spirit was fierce. She defied the men of her village, including the craft center manager and came to URMUL to demand work on her own. Today, by participating in the Accenture product development training, she has successfully generated an order worth INR 7 lacs for her village group.



# WAY FORWARD

The programme envisions changing the entire crafts ecosystem. The aim is to collaborate with the local artisans to empower them in the craft that was within their family for generations. We are ensuring that upskilling of artisans results in reviving this traditional livelihood avenue based on crafts.

These artisans through hand-holding trainings have been able to upgrade their capabilities. Through the customized sets of training, workers with varied skillsets were able to refine their output. The programme ensured that the artisans are skilled to create products that are ready to be marketed. The last leg of the programme would





focus on reaching out to an exponential number of women and ensuring that the already skilled ones keep up with the market trends.

The team ensured that the following principles of maximizing social impact was ensured throughout the programme.

#### **The Monitoring Process:**

Logical Framework (log frame) approach was used as the basis for monitoring, evaluation, and evidence-based decision-making. At the project execution level, quarterly output tracking and review meetings were also held with all the stakeholders. Periodic qualitative assessments helped the team understand and document the aspirations and challenges of the project. At the project management level, the Program Review Task Force was formed. The effective monitoring system was established for the project with reporting structure and clear timelines. There was an annual evaluation after every project year and impact evaluation at the end of the project.

#### **Project Sustainability:**

URMUL ensured sustainability right from the beginning by involving artisan groups, local community, grassroots people's group, technical resource organizations and important

stakeholders in the designing and planning stage of this project. Therefore, there was a higher sense of ownership and acceptance and it significantly influenced sustainability.

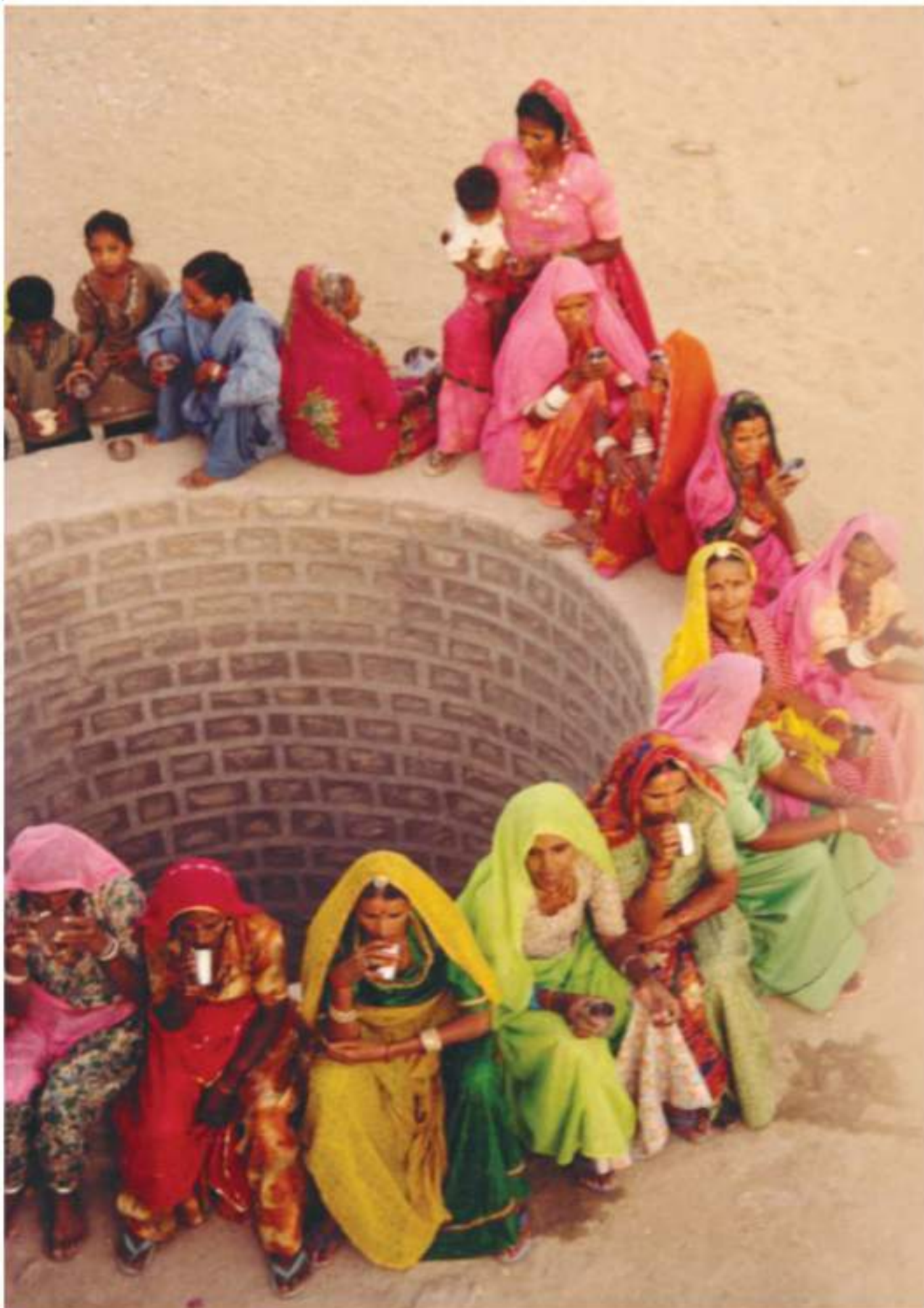
#### **Scaling-Up:**

As part of its coverage plan, URMUL developed a plan to replicate this initiative across different pockets of Rajasthan reaching out to diversified crafts and craft persons. Artisans were promoted to organize into producer groups/companies. URMUL facilitated the initiative of linking more and more artisan groups with marketing channels. The project created opportunities to establish linkages with the relevant financial, training and research institutions, linkages with Government schemes were also promoted.

#### **Replicability:**

The project developed the mechanism to share the best practices and learning from this project with other artisan groups, donors, government and NGOs to replicate this model. The organization encourages trained beneficiaries to converge for cross-sectional learning so they can exchange information on employment, provide mutual support and marketing opportunities and motivation to the unemployed youth beyond the project.







# THE PROJECT PARTNERS

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## Funding Partner

Accenture Corporate Citizenship: Skills to Succeed Grants Project

Accenture supports project Skills to Succeed. With its corporate citizenship work, Accenture supports vulnerable communities around the world. Accenture has created a long-term value for the people and communities through skills to succeed in the future. Corporate citizenship is focused on building skills to succeed. It aims to create a sustainable impact in communities by taking initiatives to equip close to 500,000 people around the world with the skills to get a job or build a business.



## Managing Partner

Charities Aid Foundation (CAF)

CAF India works to promote and support strategic giving for a more equitable and sustainable society. They create a lasting impact on development and poverty issues in partnership with donors and charities. CAF works with over 50 corporates and helps over 32,000 individual donors. They extend support to more than 300 non-profits supporting over 500 projects across 52 districts in 21 states in India. CAF promotes and supports causes to bring together a variety of social development actors. They interact through knowledge sharing, practical cooperation, and coalition building.



## Implementing Partner

URMUL Rural Health Research & Development Trust

URMUL works with communities in Thar desert by making them self-reliant and ensuring the availability of a package of development services that they decide on, design, implement and eventually finance. URMUL has worked on key themes such as health, education, livelihood, women and child development, skill development and capacity building, microfinance, agriculture, water, and environment. We have successfully responded to community needs and opportunities in the last 35 years.



# URMUL CRAFTS ECOSYSTEM

We started in the early 90s with a socio-development approach on a crafts journey, with a mandate to improve the lives of artisans practicing various styles of weaving and embroidery. For people inhabiting a desert which abounds in sand dunes and lacks all resources, it was extremely difficult to gain access to welfare services. We worked on basic health and education to start with. The potential of the crafts and artisans, motivated us to invest further in developing these possibilities. There was design support, raw material, quality, market access, and enterprise management improvement. In the course of the next 15 years, thousands of artisans experienced a substantial increase in their incomes. They were able to develop beautiful products that were going out in the handicrafts markets globally.

By 2005, URMUL developed several successful crafts clusters in various parts of Rajasthan working with artisans on weaving, pit-loom, embroidery, and dyeing. Since then the groups are operating in a social enterprise model, in partnerships of community spread across the entire western Rajasthan.

Since 2015, The Skills to Succeed program, in partnership with Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) and with financial support from Accenture, has significantly bolstered these enterprises. Although, these artisans have to constantly adapt to the changing realities of the market and the growing expectations of paying customers. Through the aid of the program, strong assistance is provided to them with resources, training, technology, and market linkages support to artisans and artisans run enterprises. This publication reflects on some of these interventions and outcomes.

Skills to succeed programme by:



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