



IIFL Foundation

Press Release

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IIFL Foundation Launches Project Hunar to Empower Rural Women Artisans in Barmer, Rajasthan

IIFL Foundation has partnered with Banglanatak, a cultural and upskilling organization, to provide skill-based training to 220 rural women artisans in appliqué work in the border district of Barmer, Rajasthan.

Mrs. Madhu Jain, Director of IIFL Foundation, said, “Project Hunar stands as a catalyst for change in the aspiration district of Barmer. It is part of our effort to support small entrepreneurs and the local economy in the border districts of India.” Beyond Barmer, IIFL Foundation has supported multiple projects in hospitality and retail training for young local students and entrepreneurs in the border districts of Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh.

Project Hunar aims to empower women appliqué artists across five villages—Dhanau, Alamsar, Sawa, Itada, and Burhan ka Tala— in the Chohtan block by enhancing their skills, preserving their craft, and fostering self-reliance through market access and financial literacy.

The appliqué craft, passed down through generations, is a symbol of cultural identity in Barmer. However, these women artists face multiple barriers, including limited mobility, dependence on middlemen, and lack of education. Project Hunar addresses these challenges by equipping women with the capacity to enhance their skills and product repertoire and providing them with navigation skills for augmented market performance.

As a catalyst for change, this initiative reduces women artists’ reliance on local moneylenders and empowers them to take charge of their economic futures. By creating opportunities for women to learn advanced stitching, tailoring, and product diversification, it helps them move beyond traditional constraints and redefine their roles within their families and communities.



Central to the project is the Training of Trainers (ToT) program held from November 11–30, 2024, where 25 women artists from the five villages received hands-on training from experts like designer Abhijit Sardar, Kasidakari artist Mahendra Kumar, and local master artist Harchand Kaga. Post the ToT program, these master trainers are now transferring their knowledge to 198 women artists across the five villages, expanding their skills to create diverse products like shirts, jackets, kaftans, cushion covers, and bags. The ongoing rollout training for the 198 artists, scheduled in five phases, started on December 2, 2024, and will last until December 21, 2024. The project was inaugurated on November 28, 2024.

The impact of Project Hunar is already visible. During the Maru Udan Festival, seven women from Chohtan showcased their work, gaining exposure and registering in the district artisan directory. The recognition of their craft by officials, including Barmer District Magistrate Tina Dabi, reflects the transformative potential of this initiative.

For women living in Barmer, many from immigrant communities, the project represents more than skill development—it offers hope and the chance to overcome generations of marginalization. By enabling market access, fostering creativity, and preserving cultural traditions, Project Hunar paves the way for a brighter, self-sufficient future for these women and their families. This initiative is not just about improving livelihoods but about creating a sustainable model of empowerment, ensuring that the legacy of appliqué lives on while empowering women to shape their own destinies.

For further information, please contact:

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