

Reviving Livelihoods through Handicrafts in Post-conflict Areas of Swat

1. Background:

Swat is famous for its rich handicrafts, including embroidery, woollen rugs, woollen shawls, beadwork, and wood carvings. These handicrafts are in high demand all over the country and have great potential to regenerate livelihoods in the post-conflict situation. Traditionally, the women of Swat have been great contributors towards the promotion of the crafts industries of their area, as it is customary for women, both young and old to weave and decorate fabrics with exquisite needlework. They cover their dresses, shawls, blankets, bed sheets, pillow covers with beautiful motifs, which adorn their homes and their dowry. These indigenous skills are the most natural and effective way of bringing the war-affected communities, especially women, out of a state of apathy and trauma and to provide them with increased opportunities for a respectable livelihood.

2. Project justification

The recent crises situation in Swat has not only caused great loss in terms of human life but has also brought about wide-spread damage to the already fragile infrastructure, thereby affecting the day to day survival of the population at large. With the male heads of families either killed or maimed, in many cases, women have become the sole bread winners of their families.

Due to the low literacy rate among women, restrictions on their mobility and other socio-cultural constraints, chances of livelihood for women were already very limited. Moreover the damage in the environment has limited their access to energy supplies such as fuel, wood and fodder, the collection of which has traditionally been their responsibility.

UNESCO Islamabad proposed an intervention under PHRP 2010, aiming at generating livelihood opportunities for women by utilizing the indigenous skills of handicrafts. The activities consist of providing training opportunities in handicraft skills and extending technical and financial assistance through distribution of toolkits, raw material and cash for training. The proposed activity was funded by DFID (15 Dec 2009 to 31 May 2010) and UNESCO implemented the same through its partner 'Heritage Foundation' in seven UCs including: Islampur, Saidu Sharif, Charbagh, Rahimabad, Barikot and Udigram

3. Achievements:

Training:

1. Almost 500 women Trained in Embroidery work, wool yarn spinning and weaving.
2. A large number of quality products have been produced by trainees including, Shawls, Stoles, mobile pouches, handbags, table napkins etc which have been exhibited for sale at Lok Virsa Islamabad on 19-22 June 2010.

NFI Distributed:

1. 110 handlooms and 53 spinning wheels distributed to women trained in Khadi work.
2. 337 embroidery toolkits distributed to women trained in embroidery work.

3. Raw material including thread and cloth provided to each women for training and making products.
4. 337 Sewing machines have been distributed among women trained in embroidery work.

Training Centres:

1. One closed vocational centre revived in Udigram. (6 Sewing Machines, 1 Knitting Machine and 1 Computer provided)
2. One permanent (Loom centre) Khadi centre established in Islampur to continue the training of local women on loom products. (10 looms installed)
3. Women sewing centre in Landikus provided 6 sewing machines and 20 repaired.
4. Two closed pottery centres revived in Charbagh and Fatehpur.
5. 12 mini-craft centres established in private house-holds in 12 UCs to impart trainings in embroidery work.

Stipends: US \$78 per women distributed as stipends after the completion of training.

Livelihood generated so far:

1. Almost 100 women (receiving Looms) in Islampur started getting orders.
2. Livelihood revived for two families owning the 2 pottery centres in Udigram and Fatehpur.
3. 12 trainers engaged locally to impart training in mini-craft centres in 7 UCs
4. 110 Handlooms and 35 spinning wheels (distributed among trained women) have been locally produced by engaging 10 local craftsmen.
5. Through revival of vocational centre at Udigram livelihood of two trainers revived.
6. Raw material for training and producing products has been locally purchased.

