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Invisibility of women's work and opportunities for innovation has been one of the key barriers to women's empowerment. For women from disadvantaged communities, the prospect of improve their socio-economic status, in a creative manner, are doubly difficult. Women from project affected communities of Marwar-Mundwa were one such group. But following concerted efforts to promote alternative livelihoods, ACF's work with women is slowly changing the scenario. Supported by ACF, a women's group is now building their capacities and enhancing their skills to craft their own future.



Women from PAP families during the training

ACF began working with the communities around Marwar-Mundwa alongside the land acquisition process by the company. Interventions included projects in agro-based livelihood generation, skill development and mason training. It was during this process that women from the Teli community approached ACF for training support to enhance their crafting skills.

ACF took the thought forward, and did feasibility study to understand the market potential for handicrafts.

Given the huge demand for such products, ACF was convinced that these women could transform their artistic skills into a viable business.

The women enthusiastically teamed up as a self-help group, named it as “Maa Durga SHG”, and prepared themselves for an intensive 60-day training program. Facilitated by a trainer from Nagaur, the workshop included daily sessions on life-skills and basic literacy. The workshop also incorporated the concepts of leadership, communication, and decision making through interactive sessions.



Women learnt skills of weaving purses, wall hangings, and other artistic works, and soon had enough items to display and sell. With support from NABARD, these artisans had an opportunity to put up a stall and display their wares at the Handicrafts Fair in Nagaur. But the opportunity was a huge challenge.

These women had never stepped out of their villages before. And to think they had to sell their work in a fair – interacting, talking, convincing and selling!

Not only did they sell their products and make a decent profit, but they also received an appreciation certificate and a memento from the District Industrial Centre, Nagaur, for their efforts. This experience was a huge learning for the women. The encouragement they had received at the fair boosted their hopes.



They believed that they could take up the challenge of creating and selling their products, and earn their own livelihood.

Today, this group of artisans have been linked to a marketing agency called Bhumika Handicrafts that reaches the local markets of Hyderabad, Pushkar, Salasar, and Khatushyamji Area. The group receives a fixed labour cost for each product, allowing each woman to earn an average of Rs. 100 per day

Apart from filling a creative void, the work allows women to save for themselves as well as their family's future. They are looking to rope in more women in the group to be able to meet the market demand, and grow in their business. With their drive, and zeal to be economically independent, these women are now inspiring change and making a difference.
