Crafts collectives in western Rajasthan: Learnings from URMUL Trust's work

Aastha Dang
International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)

Fatema Patel
3ie

Jane Hammaker
3ie

Shreya Banerjee
3ie

Sunetra Banerjee
3ie

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Note to readers

This process evaluation report has been submitted as part of the Swashakt: Empowering Women's Collectives Evidence Program. This program aimed to generate evidence-based scalable technical interventions for building collective livelihoods in India that economically empower women and are economically viable. 3ie has copy-edited and formatted the content for publication.

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Executive summary

In 2020, the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) launched a program called Swashakt: Empowering Indian Women's Collectives, which aims to generate evidence on interventions that enhance the viability, sustainability, and returns of women's empowerment collectives, thereby promoting women's empowerment. Under Swashakt, 3ie is funding the implementation of four pilot and five at-scale projects across ten Indian states that support collectives and group-based models for women-led businesses.

The URMUL Trust's intervention is one of the five scaled projects being implemented as part of the Swashakt program. For the last three decades, the Trust has been working to preserve the traditional crafts of western Rajasthan and address the challenges faced by rural artisans through upskilling programs and better sales opportunities for their products. As part of Swashakt, the URMUL Trust plans to engage approximately 4,600 artisans across six districts of Rajasthan by providing a range of interventions for craft collectives at different stages of maturity (incubation, consolidation, and scale). The interventions will include support to enhance capabilities, improve technology and knowledge, design and brand products, and improve access to finance and market linkages.

This report presents the results of a process evaluation conducted by 3ie with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The main objective of the study is to document processes and glean lessons from the URMUL Trust's implementation model, identify enablers and barriers to setting up collectives in the incubation stage and overall project implementation, and to understand the socioeconomic and cultural contexts and their impact on project implementation. The study also provides recommendations for the implementation partner, policymakers, technical support units, and other organizations working on similar interventions.

For the study, qualitative research was conducted in five districts: Alwar, Sri Ganganagar, Bikaner, Jodhpur, and Jaisalmer. The methodology relied on in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with female collective leaders, members and their husbands, as well as key informant interviews with village heads, trainers, and project managers from the URMUL Trust team. The interventions examined in this study included those providing trainings to craft collectives at different stages in their maturity, establishing Marugandha Crafts and Agri Foods Private Limited as a platform to sell and market products, facilitating market linkages and branding support, and providing minimal infrastructure support.

Findings show that the URMUL Trust's long-term presence in the implementation areas has established a level of trust among participants in the area, which makes the mobilization process easier for the organization. The URMUL team is well versed in the local context, and this is reflected in overall function of the interventions. In addition to skills development trainings, they also provide participants with information on government schemes and services and other kinds of support, including vaccination camps and awareness sessions on issues concerning the daily lives of artisans.

The URMUL Trust also enables women to work on orders from their homes, which is a significant advantage for many women who are burdened with childcare and household responsibilities, or who have limited mobility due to restrictive gender norms in the area.

However, the URMUL team also points to the advantages of having a workspace, such as peer learning, better-quality products, more exposure, and increased awareness levels among artisans, to name a few. The Trust usually selects trainers from existing artisan communities in intervention villages, who first undergo a training of trainer's program. This model is a good way to ensure sustainability and promote a sense of ownership of the work among artisans.

The study also highlights the various challenges faced during program implementation, both by the implementor and female participants. Attrition is a key challenge during trainings and production, due to the availability of alternate sources of employment with better wages. The Trust deals with this by designating a collective leader who coordinates attendance, follows up with participants, and ensures that orders are completed on time.

The changing aspirations of young girls is another factor that impacts attendance and participation in the program; many respondents reported that the crafts sector is seen to be labor-intensive and not a viable and steady source of income by the younger generation. Other challenges include a lack of experienced trainers in the villages, sectoral challenges such as the presence of cheaper power-loom products impacting the marketability of handloom products, and social challenges emerging from the presence of different caste groups in the villages.

Restrictive social and gender norms pose a barrier to implementors as well as female participants. In Rajasthan, women are bound by rigid gender norms that considerably limit their mobility, freedom, and agency. The burden of domestic responsibilities and childcare falls primarily on women, making it difficult for them to participate in the program, and family members are generally not supportive of women attending trainings and working outside of the home. Further, even craft production activities are gendered, with some activities traditionally undertaken only by men (such as marketing, sales, design, and procurement of raw materials), leaving women artisans without exposure to all aspects of the value chain. Other major concerns expressed by women in some craft clusters were low-wage, rate-related issues, inconsistency in orders leading to unsteady income, and wages lost during training program attendance.

Several recommendations emerged for more effective implementation. In order to empower women artisans, it is crucial that women are trained and exposed to all activities of the value chain, including procurement, marketing, sales, and negotiations. Currently, women from different village-level groups don’t interact with each other. The URMUL Trust should facilitate occasional meetings and sessions for women across groups and clusters in a systematic manner to facilitate cross-learning.

Some artisans spoke about wage rates being low and not changing in line with increased prices over the years. The Trust should ensure that women are well-informed about market and wage rates and other information to ensure that they feel empowered and well-versed enough to collectively decide wage rates themselves.

Further, the Trust should provide compensation for wage loss during trainings, as well as the cost of transport and refreshments. To tackle the issue of rigid gender norms, it is important to conduct awareness and sensitization sessions at the village level and with family members of women artisans, and to establish childcare services such as creches in the villages or work sheds.

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Acronyms

PC	Producer company
BoD	Board of directors
CIG	Common interest group
FGD	Focus group discussion
IDI	In-depth interview
KII	Key informant interview
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
ASHA	Accredited social health activist
SHG	Self-help group
UT	URMUL Trust
UMBVS	Urmul Marusthali Bunkar Vikas Samiti

1. Introduction

Empowering women to control their economic lives is a critical step towards achieving gender equality and a more equitable and just society. There is strong emphasis across national and global organizations on enhancing women's economic empowerment. One strategy espoused by several donor organizations to bring about women's economic empowerment is the promotion of women-owned businesses.

In 2020, the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) launched a program called Swashakt: Empowering Indian Women's Collectives, which supports women-owned businesses by providing funding to nine organizations (including private and public partnerships) to establish or replicate models of women's collective rural enterprises in India.

The program defines women's collective enterprises as groups of women collaborating on a common entrepreneurial activity—such as production, procurement, or marketing—with formalized joint ownership of the business, or informal methods of pooling and sharing resources. The collectives may be registered as companies or cooperatives, or informal clusters such as producer groups. These rural women's group enterprises are viewed as vehicles for promoting women's economic empowerment and are therefore called women's empowerment collectives (Dang et al. 2022).

The Swashakt program was launched at a critical time, when decades of advancement towards women's empowerment were set back by the outbreak of COVID-19 (Ibid). Globally, between 2019 and 2020, women's employment declined by 4.2%, (representing a drop of 54 million jobs), while unpaid work increased (ILO 2021). Women-owned businesses have also been affected disproportionately due to pre-existing gender biases that were exacerbated during the pandemic (Manolova et al. 2020; Torres et al. 2021). In this context, it becomes ever more important to study the viability and sustainability of women's collective enterprises, and their potential for scale-up.

The Swashakt program aims to generate evidence on interventions that enhance the viability, sustainability and returns for women's empowerment collectives, thereby promoting women's empowerment. Under Swashakt, 3ie is funding the implementation of four pilot and five at-scale projects across ten Indian states that support collectives and group-based models for women-led businesses. These include non-farm and service enterprises operating in partnership with the government.

One of the five scaled projects is being implemented by the URMUL Trust (UT) in western Rajasthan. The UT has over three decades of experience in enterprise creation in the crafts sector and has played a significant role in preserving traditional handicrafts in western Rajasthan. The Trust primarily works to address challenges faced by rural artisans through skilling programs and better selling opportunities for their products.

1.1 Program activities

As part of their project entitled "Empowering Women's Craft Collectives" under Swashakt, the UT aims to undertake the following activities.

1.1.1 Establishing craft collectives and providing skills development trainings

The UT aims to provide a range of inputs to craft collectives at different stages of maturity (incubation, consolidation, and scale). Collectives at the incubation stage will constitute new clusters of artisans with whom the Trust will begin engagement during the project period. Collectives at the more advanced consolidation and scale stages have been working with the UT for some time. They aim to reach approximately 4,600 artisans across six districts in Rajasthan (Alwar, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Nagaur, and Sri Ganganagar).

The project seeks to empower women artisans from marginalized communities to make informed decisions about their craft and trade, to gain social and financial autonomy and agency, and to expand their businesses through resilient and sustainable craft collectives. The table below describes project locations, stages of maturity, crafts being practiced, and the expected number of artisans to be mobilized and trained.

Table 1: Project details: location, crafts practiced, number of artisans

Stage	District	Craft	Expected no. of artisans
Incubation: Collectives initiated but no production or trainings have been provided	Alwar	Block printing and stitching	700
	Jodhpur	Desi wool	440
	Bikaner	Desi wool, dyeing, weaving	700
	Jaisalmer	Embroidery	380
	Nagaur	Dari weaving	30
Consolidation: Collectives have participated in training and may start production	Jaisalmer	Weaving, applique, stitching	320
	Jodhpur	Weaving, stitching	280
	Bikaner	Weaving, dyeing	100
Scale: Collectives are highly trained and production-ready	Bikaner	Embroidery, stitching, weaving, applique, tie-dye	1,650
	Sri Ganganagar	Embroidery	550

The inputs to be provided include support to enhance capabilities and skills, knowledge and design, as well as improved access to technology, finance and markets. Given that collectives at different stages of maturity will require different kinds of support, specific sets of customized inputs and trainings will be provided.

1.1.2 Facilitating linkages between craft clusters

As part of its intervention under Swashakt, the UT is aiming to integrate and link the value chains of different craft clusters to help create a more diverse range of products using different crafts, and also to increase demand and the scale of production. This will, in turn, increase income for women in common interest groups (CIGs). The Trust also continues to build market linkages for all crafts collectives.

1.1.3 Branding through Marugandha Crafts and Agri Food Private Limited, and design support

In 2022 the UT established Marugandha Crafts and Agri Food Private Limited (initially called Urmul Desert Crafts), a registered company, with the aim of creating a single uniform brand identity for the craft products of western Rajasthan. The company is envisaged as a platform through which all products made by the cooperative societies will reach the market. The UT will also provide design support for collectives supported by this program; an external branding agency has been hired to help with this process.

1.1.4 Infrastructure support

The Trust will also provide monetary support for the renovation of collectives' existing work sheds as part of the Swashakt program.

1.2 Research questions

The main research questions that the process evaluation responds to are:

1. What are the enablers and barriers to setting up women's collectives?
2. What are the enablers and barriers to project implementation?
3. How does overall context impact project implementation, specifically its impact (and/or lack thereof)?

In this process evaluation, we aim to understand the structure and functioning of the cooperative societies and CIGs being established up by the UT. The study also examines the intervention planned by URMUL and its implementation process, as well as the societal context and initial barriers and facilitators to the implementation process. The fieldwork for this process evaluation was undertaken soon after the baseline process was completed. New artisans were still being mobilized in several locations, and trainings for various crafts and stages had been initiated. The work had not yet started in Nagaur; therefore, fieldwork was not undertaken there.

Our research suggests the following:

1. Social and gender norms are a constraint on women's participation.
2. There is a declining market for handloom products with the rise of power looms.
3. Wages from crafts work cannot match agricultural wages in peak agricultural periods, resulting in attrition and seasonal dropouts, which in turn adversely affect the ability to meet output targets in these months.

The first section of the report provides an overview of the study's methodology, a description of the cooperatives set up by the UT, and the Trust's implementation model. The next section describes the contexts (i.e., the predominant socioeconomic, cultural, and gender norms) that impact the lives of women weavers in these areas. The final section outlines enablers and barriers to the implementation process and provides recommendations to mitigate them.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Sample size

Qualitative data were collected across five districts in the state of Rajasthan: Alwar, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Bikaner, and Sri Ganganagar. Fieldwork was not undertaken in Nagaur, as the implementation work under Swashakt had not yet begun in the district.

Key informant interviews (KIIs), in-depth interviews (IDIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted in the project's intervention villages and in one control or comparison village per district.

Interviews and FGDs were conducted with artisans of different crafts in the intervention villages. IDIs were also conducted with husbands or family members of the artisans, and CIG leaders. KIIs were conducted with influential individuals like *panchayat* (village council) members from the villages, field mobilizers, program management teams, and trainers from the UT team. This was all done with the objective of gaining an understanding of the context in both intervention and non-intervention villages, insight into the different crafts being practiced by people in the region, their value-chain activities, and income earned.

Table 2: Sample details

Location	No. of villages	Stakeholder	FGDs	IDIs	KIIs
Bikaner	3	Women members	2	2	
		Women artisans (non-members)	3		
		Community gatekeeper (village head/*panchayat* member/ASHA/ *anganwadi* (childcare) worker)			3
		Husband of woman member		2	
		Vyavasthapak (CIG leader)		1	
		Trainer		1	
Jodhpur	3	Women members	2	2	
		Women artisans (non-members)	3		
		Community gatekeeper (village head/*panchayat* member/ASHA/ *anganwadi* worker)			3
		Husband of woman member		2	
		Vyavasthapak		1	
		Trainer		1	
Sri Ganganagar	2	Women members	1	1	
		Women artisans (non-members)	2		
		Community gatekeeper (village head/*panchayat* member/ASHA/ *anganwadi* worker)			2
		Husband of woman member		1	
		Vyavasthapak		1	
		Trainer		1	
Jaisalmer	4	Women members	2	2	
		Women artisans (non-members)	4		
		Community gatekeeper (village head/*panchayat* member/ASHA/ *anganwadi* worker)			4
		Husband of woman member		2	
		Vyavasthapak		2	

Location	No. of villages	Stakeholder	FGDs	IDIs	KIIs
Alwar	1	Women members	1	1	
		Women artisans (non-members)	1		
		Community gatekeeper (village head/*panchayat* member/ASHA/ *anganwadi* worker)			1
		Husband of woman member		1	

Note: ASHA = accredited social health activist.

1.3.2 Data collection process

- **Consultant selection**: Consultants for data collection were selected through an interview process. Key criteria included knowledge of the local language and context to ensure seamless conversations between respondents and the interviewer.
- **Consultant training**: The consultants underwent extensive trainings by the 3ie team before the fieldwork. They were introduced to the Swashakt program and discussed the tools and process for conducting the fieldwork. They were provided with a fieldwork protocol guide that highlighted the dos and don'ts for the fieldwork.
- **Tool preparation**: Designing the tools for data collection was an iterative process. The fieldwork began after the baseline data collection was completed. This means that the implementation process within the three stages (incubation, consolidation, and scale) had just begun in treatment villages. Mobilization of women was ongoing, and some trainings had taken place. This is important, as it also guided the way in which the tools and research questions were envisaged. The interview guides and tools were prepared for the following categories: FGDs and IDIs with participants and non-participants in the incubation, consolidation and scale stages; IDIs with participants and husbands of participants across all stages; and KIIs with the field team, community mobilizer, production coordinator, and management team. These tools can be found in Annex 1.
- **Piloting the data collection tool**: The institutional review board process began after the interview guides were prepared. Simultaneously, the guides were piloted with several groups of women in Bikaner, Rajasthan to check their viability. Based on this pilot, a few questions within the broader sub-themes were added, while others, which were irrelevant at this point, were deleted from the guide. An important objective of the pilot was not only to test its efficacy, but also its timing. Both IDIs and FGDs were targeted for around 1–1.5 hours; beyond this, participants can lose focus or interest.
- **Planning the fieldwork**: Fieldwork was planned in close coordination with the implementation partner, URMUL. A detailed field plan was created, including district, village location, and data collection to be undertaken. Since mobilization in many locations was either ongoing or yet to begin, the field plan was devised accordingly. The field coordinator from the URMUL team helped with mobilization and facilitation of the interview process in treatment villages.

  In the control villages, the mobilization process to interview women was carried out by field consultants with support from URMUL team members. The field plan

was devised, determining the total days spent for travel, mobilization, and data collection. The fieldwork took close to three months (with a break of a few days in between) due to distances between villages and the large number of interviews and FGDs conducted with participants in various crafts across the three stages of incubation, consolidation, and scale.

- **Challenges during data collection:** The team faced several challenges during the data collection process:
  - The field location was remote, and researchers had difficulty commuting and finding hotels. Travel between their residence and the field location took several hours every day, which also led to a longer duration of the fieldwork.
  - It was also important to meet women at a time when they would be free and available to engage. This was not always easy since women had to go to their place of work, take care of their children, undertake household chores, and then find time for these interviews. Most women were engaged in agricultural work as it was the harvest season, decreasing their availability for interviews. This led to long wait hours or repeat visits for the field consultants to complete interviews.
  - Rigid gender and social norms restricted women from speaking freely, which made FGDs particularly difficult. Participating in FGDs with other women from the same village precluded respondents' anonymity, leading to inhibition and curbed expression.
- **Translation and transcription**: Once the interview guides were recorded and uploaded, they were transcribed and translated by consultants.
- **Coding**: The translated interviews were coded in NViVo® and guided by a coding framework with thematic codes and subcodes (Annex 3).
- **Analysis**: Once the coding was complete, the team analyzed the data for broad themes and emerging observations, which were helpful in writing the report.

1.3.3 Timeline

Table 3: Study timeline

Activity	Jan–Mar 2022	April–June 2022	July–Sept 2022	Oct–Dec 2022	Jan–March 2023	April–May 2023	June–Aug 2023
Tool preparation							
Institutional review board							
Piloting the tools							
Recruitment and training of field consultants							
Preparation of the coding framework							
Data collection							
Transcription and translation							
Data coding							
Data analysis							
Report writing							

2. The URMUL Trust intervention: structure of collectives

This section describes the structure of the various sub-bodies (societies, clusters, CIGs) established by the UT, and the ways in which they interact with each other and with the UT. It highlights the origins of the Trust, and how different socio-political and economic contexts impacted its evolution. It delves into the companies set up by UT, the crafts practiced under them, and the value chain for each craft. It covers program activities, whether they occur in artisans' homes or CIG spaces, and the production-to-market journey of products made at the village, cluster, and society level.

2.1 A brief description of cooperative societies

Modern cooperatives originated in Europe during the late nineteenth century and gradually spread to low- and middle-income countries, where they initially met with mixed success. African cooperatives failed at the outset, but India, Argentina, and Brazil successfully established cooperative ventures (Ortmann and King 2007). The concept of cooperative institutes first came to India in 1904, with the passing of the Cooperatives Credit Societies Act (Kamenov 2019). Cooperatives provide an alternative for marginalized producers to organize, move up the value chain, and gain business ownership (Venkatkumar and Sontakki 2012). Aggregation of producers enables them to benefit from economies of scale, which reduce the cost of inputs and increases access to credit and other resources (Ibid).

2.2 Genesis of the UT collectives

URMUL Dairy was established in the Bikaner district of Rajasthan in 1972 as part of the Operation Flood program.[1] In 1984, the Dairy formed the URMUL Rural Health Research and Development Trust as a means of providing quality healthcare to underprivileged populations in rural areas (particularly women and children) by training local women and *dai-mas* [midwives] to provide healthcare. Its board of trustees includes farmers' representatives, the chief medical and health officer, the principal of the Bikaner Medical College, and the district collector.

While working in the drought-prone region of western Rajasthan, the URMUL Rural Health Research and Development Trust determined that local crafts-based income-generation projects could help to alleviate poverty by providing regular and sustained employment to women artisans. The area's large migrant and refugee population is skilled in traditional crafts (such as *mukka* embroidery [a type of raised embroidery using metallic thread] and applique), and Sanjoy Ghose, a founder of URMUL, saw the *ambar charkha* [spinning wheel] as a potential way to capitalize on these skills and the available markets.

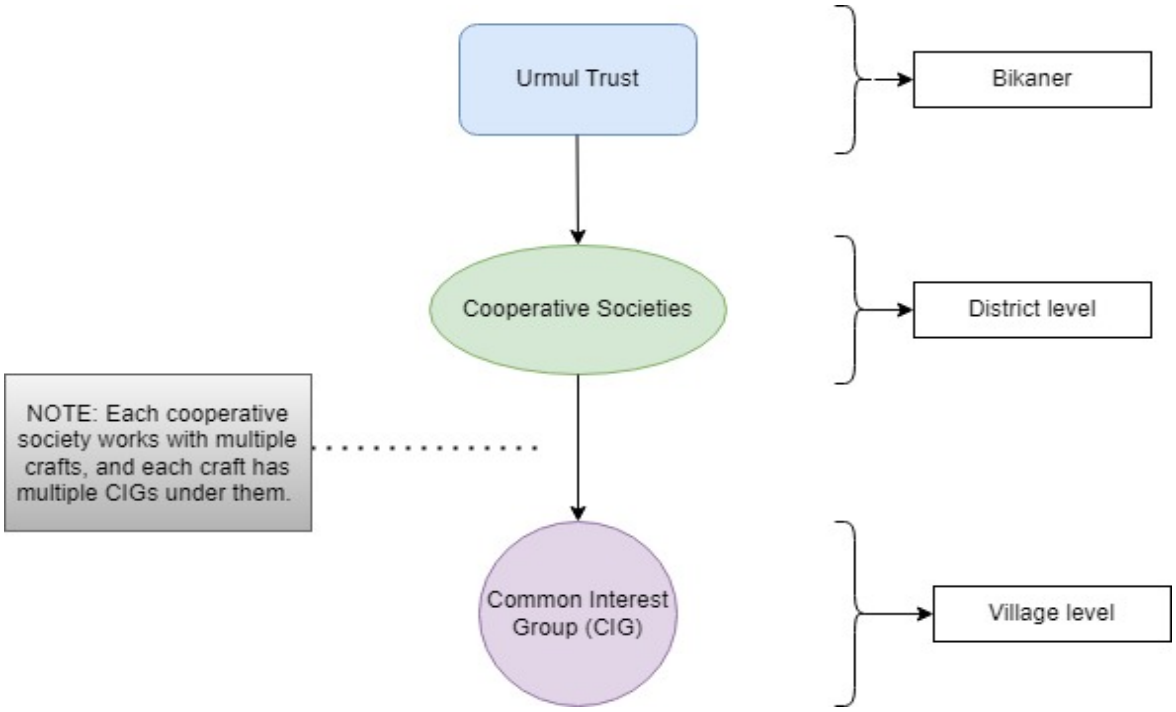
[1] Operation Flood is one of the world's largest rural development programs. It was launched in 1970 to help dairy farmers direct their own development, providing them with control over the resources they create. The bedrock of Operation Flood has been village milk producers' cooperatives, which procure milk and provide inputs and services, making modern management and technology available to members. The objectives of Operation Flood include increased in milk production, higher rural incomes, and reasonable prices for consumers. (Source: National Dairy Development Board).

The Trust began working with women in Rajasthan—who had low education levels, very little mobility and agency, and remained under the *purdah* [gender segregation] system—to earn an income through this craft work, which they had already been engaged in for decades. It began to establish independent cooperative societies (also called sister organizations in other parts of western Rajasthan) with decentralized operations.

The UT supports these societies/sister organizations and provides them with initial handholding (including initial working capital, training, forming networks, and branding, design, and marketing support) for approximately 2–2.5 years on average. The Trust's work to leverage women's existing skills is exemplified by its intervention in Pokhran, where weaving has been practiced historically; the Trust provided training in other crafts, such as applique, and created linkages to services such as financial assistance (to hire a marketing agency) and capital (to create new workspaces).

As mentioned above, the UT's board of trustees includes farmers' representatives, the chief medical and health officer, principal of the Bikaner Medical College and the district collector. The idea was not to create a system parallel with that of the government, but to facilitate better coordination between the government and the NGO, as this also ensures the organization's long-term scale and sustainability. Since 2020, the trustees are referred to and function as an advisory board. The diagram below shows the structure of the different organizations.

Figure 1: The UT and its established collectives (CIGs and cooperative societies)



2.3 Cooperative societies (sister organizations)

The UT established cooperative societies with decentralized operations, as it was proving difficult to manage all operations from Bikaner. A cooperative society is an independent and legally registered entity that manages operations and production

activities independently of the UT,[2] which acts as a supporting entity. It provides initial handholding support for several years at the incubation stage, after which it shifts its focus to providing market linkages and occasional training.

2.3.1 Structure

Since artisans in the region practice several crafts (such as macrame, crochet, stitching, embroidery, dyeing, weaving, applique, painting, and block printing), each society chooses which area and specific crafts they want to work with. The choice of craft is determined through a needs assessment survey and the availability of artisans in that location.

Each independent functioning society comprises:

1. A secretary, who is the primary decision maker;
2. Project teams; and
3. A board of directors (BoD), which includes:
    - members of the community who are artisans,
    - an influential member from the village or community, and
    - an ex-officio member from the UT.

The BoD for each society ideally comprises 10–11 members, at least one third of whom are women. Its main responsibility is to conduct periodic reviews of the society and to work on its business plans. BoD members are elected by the general council, which comprises all artisans in each society.

Table 4 lists the UT's seven cooperative societies, their areas of work, and the crafts that each practices.

Table 4: Cooperative societies established by the UT

Sr No	Name of society	Location	Craft	Other work
1.	Urmul Seemant Samiti	Bajju	Embroidery	Agriculture, health, education
2.	Urmul Setu	Lunkaransar	Macrame, crochet, stitching, embroidery, dyeing, weaving	Education, agriculture
3.	Urmul Marusthali Bunkar Vikas Samiti (UMBVS)	Phalodi	Weaving	
4.	UMBVS	Pokhran	Handloom Weaving	
5.	Marugandha	Pokhran	Applique, weaving, stitching	Agriculture
6.	Urmul Khejri	Nagaur	Dhurrie weaving (men only) A crafts vertical is being added to this society as part of the Swashakt intervention and is in the incubation stage (we speak more about stages of	Bonded labor

[2] In the report, the term "societies" has been used interchangeably with "cooperative societies established by the UT."

Sr No	Name of society	Location	Craft	Other work
			clusters in the following section). Prior to this, Urmul Khejri only worked on bonded labor. Currently only the village of Tankla is associated with Urmul Khejri and has so far conducted only one training for men, though it was also attended by their spouses.	
7.	Sauhard	Alwar	Stitching, block printing	Village-level governance

2.4 Clusters and CIGs

Each society has a certain number of villages it is associated with; in each village, the UT mobilizes women to form CIGs, which are groups of artisans residing in one village and working for a fixed, jointly decided wage rate. Each CIG functions as one production unit, completing orders for whichever craft is practiced in the village. Members only meet when there is a new order about which they are unclear, or for which they do not have a pre-decided wage (in order to decide on this wage). Otherwise, CIGs are not required to hold monthly meetings, and it is also not necessary to work from a center, though this is a preferable way to collectivize artisans to ensure the quality and efficiency of their work.

A woman can only be a member of a single CIG; switching CIGs is not possible because each is in a specific village and women cannot go to different villages for different crafts. For a group to be qualified as a CIG, there must be a minimum and maximum number of members, which varies for each craft. This information has been provided in the table below.

Table 5: Minimum and maximum number of members for each CIG (according to craft)

Craft	Minimum members	Maximum members
Weaving	5	15
Applique	15	30
Stitching	5	20
Embroidery	15	25
Block printing	5	10

Each CIG has members and one *vyavasthapak* [leader/president], who is usually the most active, influential, and knowledgeable person in the CIG; they negotiate with middlemen, take orders from buyers, and delegate or allocate work among CIG members. Members can vote to elect a *vyavasthapak*, or UT staff identify potential women for the role during the mobilization and relation-building phases, and they are changed only on the group's request. The *vyavasthapak* receives an additional commission based on the number of orders.

Multiple villages geographically close to each other with artisans working on one craft are called a cluster.

2.4.1 Payments process

Individual members of a CIG have bank accounts; there is no common bank account for the group. If members don't have their own bank account, they are encouraged to open one quickly, as buyers usually cannot pay in cash in these border areas, where cash payments can lead to legal repercussions. In the first incubation stage training, women are asked to open their bank accounts and informed that payments will not be made in cash.

2.4.2 Wage rates and hours of work

As mentioned earlier, all members in a CIG work for the same fixed wage rate, irrespective of the buyer. This rate is usually charged per piece of the product, and not per day. It is dependent on the complexity of the design and material used, among other factors. The objective of having a fixed wage for the CIG is to ensure that external buyers can't negotiate with individual artisans to bring down the wage rate, as there is strength in unity.

The UT plays an important role here by explaining the concept of fair wages to CIG members and informing them of the current wage rate in the market; this occurs during initial group meetings and trainings prior to the group fixing a rate. The women don't usually have this information. However, during the FGDs and interviews, some women spoke about their dissatisfaction with the low wage rate and the fact that it hasn't increased over the years, despite the increased cost of raw materials. This suggests that UT employees and managers of the cooperative societies they established have a significant influence on the wage rates of CIG members. It is unclear whether the UT informs members of any changes in market wage rates.

For all crafts, most scaled clusters receive orders and have work through the year. The newer incubation stage and consolidation stage clusters receive less work in comparison to scaled clusters, with a resultant lower income. As their skill, quality of work, efficiency, and speed improve, these clusters begin receiving more orders, though this is a slow process. If a member wants to increase her work to earn more income, she can approach the *vyavasthapak* and request an increase in her working hours. The *vyavasthapak* will consider her request and try to provide more work if there is enough supply. Wages differ as per craft, with the wage range per craft provided below. All estimates have been provided by a member of the UT.

- **Embroidery:** The wages are between Rs.120–300 per piece. A piece takes around two hours if working from home. If working from a work shed, one piece can be completed in around 80 minutes. Women in scaled clusters have work for approximately five to six months in a year. On average, they work five days a week, and usually not more than four hours a day. As per the estimate provided by the UT, these women earn approximately Rs.18,000 per month for six months a year. Artisans in the consolidation cluster receive orders for four to five months a year. Their wage rate is less than that of scaled clusters as their quality of work is not as good. They also take longer to complete orders, which decreases their per day or per month income. These artisans earn Rs.5,000–8,000 a month on average.

- **Dyeing:** Artisans in the dyeing cluster receive orders for approximately two months in a year. They work for five to six hours a day for five days a week. On average, they earn Rs.5,000–6,000 a month when they receive orders.
- **Weaving:** Weaving wages are approximately Rs.1,200–1,500 per piece, the completion of which can take four to five days (and in some cases less). Wages depend on the material used and level of intricacy required. Artisans in the scaled clusters usually work throughout the year for approximately eight hours a day and six days a week. Weaving receives the highest wages at approximately Rs.20,000–40,000 per month depending on working speed.
- **Spinning:*** The spinning clusters are currently at the incubation stage. They receive orders only from the carpet industries near the villages, and not from the cooperative societies. They receive orders for approximately eight to nine months in a year. The artisans work four hours a day and approximately five days per week, earning Rs.12,000–16,000 per month worked.
- **Applique:*** The wages are around Rs.120–300 per piece and can vary depending on the material being used. It is possible for women to earn Rs.6,000–8,000 monthly.
- **Stitching:*** The wages are around Rs.120–200 per piece.

*It is important to note that the spinning, applique, and stitching clusters are not yet functional and are therefore not receiving orders. The UT is working to scale them up and make them functional. Similarly, for the other crafts, the Trust is working to scale up the newer incubation stage clusters.

UT representatives state that the wages provided are higher on average by Rs.20 per piece across crafts than the rate provided by other buyers and the market rate. Two artisans are taken for exposure visits to keep them informed of market prices and address the issue of their exploitation by well-established brands. Many artisans are also involved in either agricultural labor work or Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) work some months of the year. Agricultural work is usually available from August to November, which pays them Rs.350–500 a day. During these months, it is possible that some artisans choose to take on agricultural work over crafts work due to the high daily wage rate. MGNREGA work is available for a maximum of three months a year, and pays Rs.180–200 per day.

2.5 Roles of the UT, societies, and CIGs

2.5.1 Role of the UT

As described above, UT and its staff play a crucial role in identifying potential areas to establish a society, identifying people to take up positions of leadership within societies and CIGs, as and conducting assessments and relationship-building exercises. The UT also provides the initial capital needed to set up these societies, with artisans not required to pay share capital. After societies have been created, the Trust holds meetings every two to three months with all societies together at the UT office, and monthly meetings with field staff. UT employees undertake visits to the society offices. These meetings ensure that the UT is able to monitor the societies' work and address any issues they might be facing in day-to-day functions.

The UT also attempts to bring women from different clusters together occasionally (usually once a year) for events such as Women's Day. While *vyavasthapaks* from

different societies come together for meetings or trainings, these are not frequent, and the UT is trying to structure these meetings so that they occur more frequently.

2.5.2 Role of societies

Once the society is established, the secretary, BoD, other members, and employees are directly involved in running the society and making all decisions. These include identifying markets for procuring raw materials, and making decisions around production, buyers, sellers, and other aspects of the value chain. The societies do not coordinate with the UT for day-to-day activities. The UT steering committee member is usually also a member of the society, and they help to coordinate and audit its finances. If the UT is executing the grant, then its project team coordinates closely with society members and involves them in decision making. The final goal is to ensure ownership of the work by the society members, as they are local people embedded in the area's socioeconomic and cultural context who can ensure the society's long-term sustainability.

2.5.3 Role of the CIG and the CIG leader

The main role of women in a CIG is to complete orders while adhering to quality requirements and timelines. The CIG leader or *vyavasthapak* is responsible for negotiating with buyers or middlemen. For example, when a buyer comes to a village to place an order, they go to the *vyavasthapak* and provide her with all details on quantity, quality, and other requirements. She then divides the work among CIG members based on each woman's efficiency level, availability, experience, and skill. It is the *vyavasthapak's* job to ensure the work is completed on time for the society to return and collect the order. She is the person in charge, even when other external buyers come to place orders.

2.6 Production process: interaction between CIGs, societies, and the UT

This section describes how CIGs, societies and the UT interact for both internal and external production at the village and district levels.

2.6.1 Production for external orders

When a cooperative society receives an order from external buyers (e.g., IKEA, Fabindia, Rangsutra), the first step is to acquire raw materials from either the market or the buyer; the next step is to begin the production process. The society places orders with a specific CIG, providing them with the raw material and specifications (e.g., design, quantity, timelines). As mentioned earlier, the society's point of contact is the CIG *vyavasthapak*.

For example, if a society receives an order for embroidered cushion covers, the first step would be to acquire raw materials and place an order with the stitching cluster/CIGs to make the covers. This would mean that some CIGs within the stitching cluster would receive orders in their respective villages. The society aims to equally distribute orders among CIGs within a cluster, but they may choose to place a larger percentage of the order with the more efficient and better-functioning CIGs if timelines are tight.

Upon completion, these cushion covers would be returned to the society, which would then make a payment to each woman's bank account in that CIG. The society would then send the cushions to an embroidery cluster/CIGs; after their completion, the product would be sent back to the society and payment would be made to the CIG members.

Following this, the society would perform quality checks and packaging, and then provide the buyer with the final order.

The society that receives the order handles the end-to-end operations, but it outsources to other societies if it does not have the capacity or skill set to complete the order. For example, if the Marugandha society gets an order for woven kurtas with embroidery, and they only have the capacity for spinning and weaving, they will complete the work by giving orders to the spinning and weaving clusters under them. However, they could outsource the embroidery work to URMUL Setu, which has embroidery clusters under it.

2.6.2 Production for internal orders

Internal production refers to products that are made to be sold directly by the cooperative societies and are designed by designers in the society. Fabric is procured from the URMUL clusters and a pilot piece (e.g., a kurta) is made. It is then sent to the various CIGs or clusters who work on it. The final product is delivered by the *vyavasthapak* to the society. Payments are made to the women members of the CIG based on the amount of work they performed. Usually, the more established CIGs receive more orders.

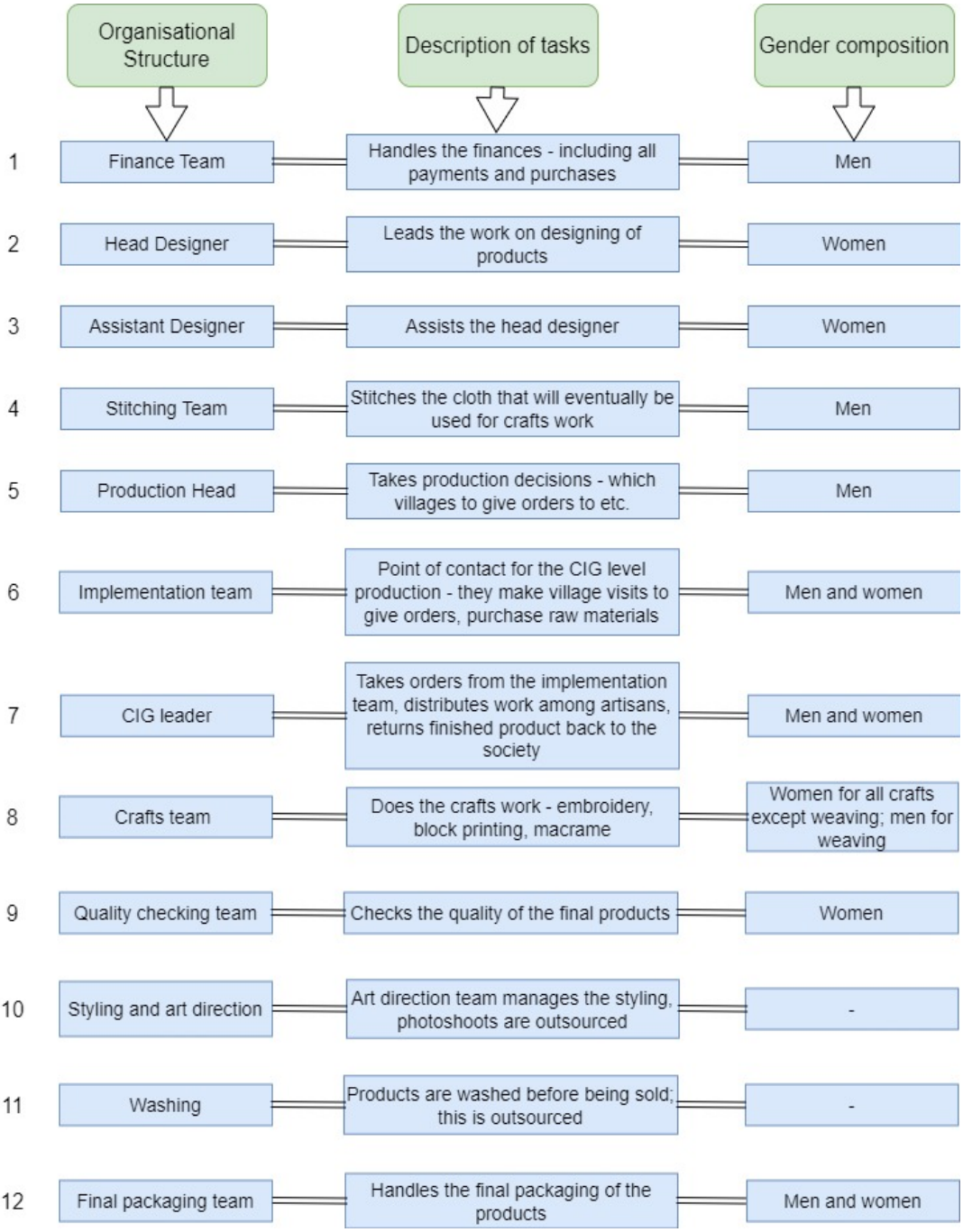
Apart from the society with which it is associated, a CIG can take orders from exporters, external buyers, individual designers, and directly from other organizations like Fabindia or IKEA. However, irrespective of who the buyer or middleman is, their rate remains the same. Having a fixed rate ensures that the scope for negotiation and bargaining for a lower price by big buyers is reduced. However, the fixed wage rate simultaneously limits the power of CIGs to negotiate for a higher price with direct buyers.

It is important to note that buyers are usually unwilling to travel to interior villages and negotiate with women, make multiple visits, provide raw material, and follow up with them. Thus, they usually look for a middleman (in this case, the societies) who will manage the business aspects for them (e.g., ensuring timely delivery of the orders). The UT aims to train at least some women in the CIG to directly negotiate with exporters or other buyers, without the involvement of middlemen.

2.7 Organizational structure and gender composition of cooperative societies

This section explains the organizational structure and gender division of roles during the production process using Urmul Seemant Samiti, Bajju as an example. It is important to note that the organizational structure and activities are largely similar for the other six cooperative societies, but the gender composition for each activity can vary slightly.

Figure 2: Organizational structure, function and gender composition of the cooperative societies



2.8 Stages of clusters

2.8.1 Incubation

This is the initial stage in establishing many CIGs within a craft cluster and involves activities conducted by the UT, including resource mapping, relationship and trust building within the community, assessments around ease of accessing the village, mobilization, consent from *panchayat* officials, trainings on crafts skills and taking orders, and ensuring quality work. The *vyavasthapak* is also selected in this stage. Different clusters in the incubation stage can be at different levels (e.g., advanced, basic) depending on how far into the stage they are, and the skill levels of cluster members.

2.8.2 Promotion from incubation to consolidation

The period up to the consolidation stage inculcates the importance of uniformity in orders as per the order request. The consolidation phase involves developing systems and processes to consistently meet client specifications and quality standards.

Once the group performs well on the following metrics, the clusters can move from the incubation to the consolidation phase:

- A good sense of the steps involved in taking orders;
- Understanding of the importance of ensuring quality;
- Understanding of the importance of meeting deadlines; and
- At least 20–40% of CIG members achieve at least an A or B grade in their performance.

For example, in the *mukka* embroidery cluster, artisans have a good embroidery skill level but haven't been working professionally. Specifically, according to the UT, the artisans are not as well equipped to maintain a certain level of quality or take care of materials, and struggle to follow instructions to make products in line with the order descriptions. To move from incubation to consolidation stage, artisans must thoroughly internalize the importance of following instructions to meet the quality specifications as described in the order (and the consequences of not following orders, such as wage deductions).

2.8.3 Promotion from consolidation to scale

When the consolidation cluster is working at a good pace for three years and the cluster requires a place to keep materials and feels the need to have machines, that cluster graduates to the scale stage. In this stage, clusters have an improved ability to accept larger orders.

2.9 Presence of work sheds

Some crafts allow artisans to work from their homes, whereas others require them to work from the center or work shed due to the need for specific equipment only available there. The center or work shed is usually at the society office where centralized production activities take place, but it could also be at the village or CIG level, where the UT uses project funds to set up workspace infrastructure in the villages. Members in weaving, block printing, and dyeing work together at the center as these crafts require machinery and equipment. Even training for these crafts is usually provided at the society office. For all other crafts, including embroidery, applique, and spinning, women work from their homes. Sometimes members do come together to collect their share of work/orders, and then work from home.

It is important to note here that while orders from the society are usually placed with individual CIGs at the village level, sometimes they are given to a cluster if its artisans work together from a common location on a regular basis (i.e., they function as one unit and not as individual CIGs). Currently, this exception only holds true for URMUL's weaving cluster in Napasar, where a work shed has been built for weaving production and trainings. The shed is for the weaving cluster that includes Napasar village and other nearby villages and is regularly used by members. However, other weaving villages don't work in the same fashion as this; for example, Gomath and That villages each have a separate production center or shed from which their weavers are required to work; orders are placed with the CIGs where production takes place.

Working from a common workspace has advantages for the women, including craft knowledge exchange, opportunities for quick guidance/assistance, ensuring the quality of products, forming social connections, and increased knowledge about health, education, and government schemes (though this is conditional on efforts undertaken by the UT and societies). However, UT representatives mentioned that women prefer to work from home due to their childcare responsibilities, household chores, and sometimes mobility issues in traveling to the center. These factors make it difficult to expect all women to work from a common workspace.

3. Program implementation

3.1 Selection criteria for members

As part of Swashakt, the UT aims to mobilize women and establish CIGs in all incubation-stage clusters. Its selection criterion for members is straightforward: a minimum of 25 women in each intervention village between the ages of 18 and 55 who are willing to attend trainings organized by the UT and work only as part of their CIGs (not independently). Membership is entirely voluntary, and participants should have some experience—current or prior—in the specific craft(s) practiced in that village; however, this is not a rigid criterion, and the UT is open to working with women who want to learn a craft but don't have prior experience. These women are sometimes from households in which a woman in the family (usually the participant's mother or grandmother) practiced the craft at some point in the past, but the skill was not passed down.

3.2 Mobilization process

The process of mobilizing women for the incubation stage activities varies by village, district, and craft. The first step is to identify the village in which the UT wants to form a CIG and conduct trainings for a specific craft. This initial selection is usually carried out using input from field staff and other crafts persons with an understanding of which villages or areas can potentially be part of the program.

Generally, two community mobilizers—one from the UT and one from the cooperative society—are involved in the on-ground mobilization process. They go to the location, conduct a thorough resource mapping, and secure buy-in from *panchayat* members, accredited social health activist (ASHA) workers, *anganwadi* [childcare] workers, and other influential people in the village. They identify caste groups and their affiliation to specific crafts work in the village, and assess the socioeconomic conditions of households in the village to determine whether there is a possibility of sustained interest and participation from the artisans.

Additionally, they note the location and its access to public transport. A UT staff member explained that "If the village is very remote, mobility becomes an issue. It is difficult for our staff and trainers and others to reach the location." If some of the village's influential people are supportive, the UT team uses their help to initiate contact and conduct the first conversation (at a community or group level) with members of the community performing the craft. Once women artisans show interest and seem inclined to participate, a list of possible participants is made. Door-to-door visits are then made to

inform these women about the program (the CIG and trainings) and to acquire consent from them and their family members. Once consent is obtained from a minimum of 25 women in the village, the training program begins.

Several mobilizers described holding community meetings and traveling door-to-door to convince family members to allow women to join the program. Though the intensity of mobilization tactics varied based on community and household norms, the incentives or justifications that community mobilizers used to convince women to join were nearly uniform across districts (i.e., earning a better and higher income).

3.3 Trainings

Providing skill-development trainings to women in CIGs at different stages of maturity is the aim of the UT's primary intervention under Swashakt. The training courses are largely crafts- and design-related. In the scale and consolidation stage, they will also encompass some marketing and business-development training. The following section details the process followed by the UT in conducting these trainings.

3.3.1 Needs assessment

A needs assessment is carried out prior to the training. The UT field staff conducts a field visit to assess:

- The number of women willing to participate;
- The location's number of active women artisans and the larger crafts ecosystem;
- Whether these women work from a work shed or from home;
- Whether they are currently earning an income from crafts, and possible locations for setting up a work shed; and
- Whether key people in the village are supportive of the intervention.

Post this assessment, a field report is prepared and shared with the UT team in Bikaner.

3.3.2 Designing training modules and selection of trainers

The UT team designs the training modules internally, in consultation with the designers, based on the needs assessment. The UT marketing person develops the module for the marketing training. As mentioned previously, the trainings provided to artisans differ based on the stage of maturity, with a different process followed for each stage, as described below:

1. For the incubation-stage trainings, the UT usually recruits trainers (who are also artisans) from other districts or states to come and teach based on need and training content. These trainings seek to instruct women in crafts to enhance their skills, quality, and output. It also includes product or design innovation trainings, quality checking and standardization trainings and exposure visits—implemented either as separate trainings or incorporated as components of the main crafts-skills training. Activities for incubation-stage artisans are designed to help ensure that they are able to:
    - Come together to work as a collective;
    - Enhance their skill and quality of output through the collective; and
    - Sustain themselves as a group.
2. For the consolidation-stage (and sometimes incubation-stage) training, trainers are selected from the artisan community itself, based on their skill set, willingness

to travel to other villages, communication and interaction skills, and leadership skills. The criteria are that women participants should be willing to listen and learn from the trainer. The field staff informs the UT team about potential candidates for the position of trainer. Key activities include refresher crafts-skill trainings, trainings on design and product innovation, sustainability and greening the value chain, quality checking, standardization, and exposure visits. The trainings for incubation-stage artisans are customized and upgraded based on the knowledge level of the consolidation-stage artisans.

3. For the scale-stage training, the UT either hires external professional trainers or conducts the training themselves. These trainers undergo a training-of-trainers course depending on the type of training and craft. Trainings are the same as those in the consolidation stage, but are customized as per the skill level of the artisans.

At the time of data collection, crafts-related training for all stages had begun, but very few of the other trainings had taken place.

3.3.3 Cross-cluster trainings

Women from one CIG or one craft cluster can't usually attend trainings organized for other clusters. However, they can request training in other crafts to diversify their skills. For example, women in Pokhran, Rajasthan were only undertaking applique, but were trained in embroidery at their request. This opportunity arose when the *vyavasthapak* from the applique CIG attended a group meeting for *vyavasthapaks* and learnt more about the various crafts and their wage rates. She then conveyed the women's demand for embroidery training, and this was eventually taken forward.

Similarly, in a village in Sujangarh, the women were only involved in tying for *bandhej* work (tie and dye – tying is separate from dyeing), but they are now demanding training on dyeing, as tying and dyeing together has more lucrative wages. Such exposure helps to expand the scope of work done by women and the demand for trainings and more lucrative work.

3.3.4 Other topics covered during trainings

The UT does not conduct separate training or awareness sessions on health, education, and other such social topics for members. However, during their trainings on crafts, marketing, and design, the UT raises awareness on menstrual health, various government health facilities accessible to women (e.g., eye camps/primary health centers/hospitals), educational facilities available, and government schemes of which they can avail (e.g., pensions, loans, artisan cards, free education, employment).

The UT staff mentioned that women bring up issues of child marriage during training, as its occurrence is high in these regions. The participants are informed of steps that can be taken to prevent such cases, and trainers share a child helpline number during the training to report child marriage.

On the first day of the training (when the newly collectivized women come together for the first time), the UT informs members about the benefits of working as a collective. They are told about fair wages, minimum wages, and market rates. However, women are not told during the trainings about the larger crafts value-chain, the sister organizations, or the potential buyers to whom they will be selling.

3.4 Facilitating linkages for, and between, craft clusters

As part of the Swashakt project, the UT is working to increase production or value-chain linkages between cooperative societies and different craft clusters within one cooperative society. Linkages already existed to a lesser extent prior to the Swashakt program, but the UT aims to strengthen them in order to create a more diverse range of products using different crafts, to meet and increase market demands, and to achieve scale—and thereby also increase the income of CIG members working at the village level.

Linkages are built based on the demand for a particular design or product. The UT facilitates the creation and strengthening of production or value-chain linkages between clusters and societies. These efforts are headed by the UT marketing team, which visits the clusters and societies to explore how this can be achieved. Upon identifying which craft clusters can be linked, the Trust works with managers of the cooperative societies to operationalize this.

It is important to note that the UT envisions that the cooperative societies will coordinate this integration and linkage-building process; the CIGs or craft clusters will not interact directly with each other. The way in which the societies and the value chains of craft clusters are being linked is described in the production process section above.

Currently, the Trust is working to link the stitching cluster with the applique and embroidery clusters, the spinning with the dyeing cluster, and the weaving and stitching clusters. The weaving cluster is already linked to the stitching, embroidery, and dyeing clusters. These linkages are based on the design of the product and the requirements. The incubation-stage villages that are being newly added to the fold will be included to this value chain.

The UT is also aiming to build market linkages for different crafts collectives at different stages. Older, more established CIGs and craft clusters need less support, but the Trust provides more consistent support to incubation-stage CIGs, which are in the process of being established and require orders to remain functional. The UT marketing team visits the different clusters and explores the potential for market linkages. For example, it is trying to facilitate a linkage between the spinning cluster at the incubation stage to the nearby carpet industry so that they can start receiving orders. Additionally, they are encouraging the societies to create a desi wool collection so the new spinning cluster can receive some orders and start operations.

3.5 Marugandha Crafts and Agri Food Private Limited: branding and design support

In addition to the cooperative societies, the UT is currently establishing Marugandha Crafts and Agri Food Private Limited, with the aim of creating a single brand for the craft products of Western Rajasthan. It is envisaged as a platform through which the products made by all the cooperative societies can reach the market. They have also hired an external branding agency to help with this process. The company will also provide design, branding, marketing, and documentation support to all societies. This initiative is being undertaken under the Swashakt program.

The platform was conceptualized and started two to three years ago by the UT and the company will operate through the main UT office in Bikaner. They aim to register it as a limited company, as this can also work as a brand name for the products they sell. They foresee that eventually all products sold will have the Marugandha Crafts and Agri Food brand or tag on them (currently, products being sold have the society names on them).

3.5.1 Structure

The BoD will comprise representatives from all seven to eight cooperative societies and some artisans will also be shareholders, along with the UT team and the employees of Marugandha Crafts and Agri Food. There will be teams for design, marketing, branding, production, quality checking, and e-commerce, and the artisans will be shareholders and members of the BoD.

3.5.2 Envisaged production process

Marugandha Crafts and Agri Food is envisaged as a platform to sell crafts, spices, and camel milk, among other things. For their crafts vertical, the design team will be responsible for deciding their collections (based on the crafts practiced by the societies), any newly introduced craft clusters, and the needs of artisans from the different clusters. For example, if there is a new desi wool cluster being set up that needs orders to start operations, Marugandha Crafts and Agri Food might design the new collection based on this need. They will then place the order with different societies based on the collection and craft. On completion of the order, the society would then send the products back to Marugandha Crafts and Agri Food, who make the payment.

However, this does not mean that societies will be limited to orders only from Marugandha Crafts and Agri Food; they will continue to function as independent units with the ability to take orders from external buyers as well. They are also not compelled to receive orders from the company. Marugandha Crafts and Agri Food will essentially provide an additional income source for these societies and artisans at the CIG level. This structure provides societies with autonomy while ensuring their sustainability.

3.5.3 Infrastructure support

This is a very small component of the UT intervention, wherein basic infrastructure support is provided to the collectives, such as setting up new work sheds and providing monetary support for the renovation of existing ones. So far, the Trust has provided asbestos shades and renovated the weaving and dyeing clusters under Swashakt, and the cost of a new work shed for the block printing cluster was entirely covered by the program.

4. Findings

This section highlights the socioeconomic and cultural context in which the project is being implemented. Gender and cultural norms were made apparent through conversations with women and participant observation, which also shed light on the barriers faced by these women and the program implementors. We also discuss caste-based practices prevalent in the region, and how various crafts are practiced by men and women from specific communities, regions, religions, and castes.

4.1 Geographical context

4.1.1 Overview of districts

Alwar: Alwar district is situated in northeastern Rajasthan. Women from various castes earn a living there through embroidery and stitching work; many have inherited these skills through traditional teachings passed down from their mothers and grandmothers. Some women have also acquired these crafts from experienced members of the community, such as shop owners in the village or neighboring individuals. Their work demonstrates the rich tradition and diversity of craft expertise in the Alwar district.

Bikaner: Bikaner is in the heart of the Thar desert, with a resultantly hot and arid climate. Embroidery and spinning wool hold deep-rooted significance there as traditional crafts passed down through generations. The schedule caste community has been actively working with wool; two to three decades ago, the Khadi Udyog *Mandir* (temple) provided substantial wool-related work, especially in carpet weaving, though this work has declined significantly in the last ten years.

Jaisalmer: Jaisalmer, nicknamed "the golden city," is located 357 miles (575 kilometers) west of the state capital of Jaipur in Rajasthan. Women there are actively involved in stitching, embroidery, and wool crafts. However, about a decade ago, the supply of wool from the government stopped, leading to a decline in spinning and weaving. Traditional loom weaving gradually vanished. Yet, the art of *mukka* embroidery persisted among the Mangalia Muslim community, as it held cultural significance and women invested both time and money into it. Some women also engaged in stitching and created dowry items with intricate designs passed down through generations. Despite changes, the spirit of craftsmanship has endured.

Jodhpur: Located on the western side of the capital city of Jaipur, Jodhpur is the second-largest city in the state of Rajasthan. There is a strong belief there that stitching provides a viable option for generating income, especially for women, and the craft is considered ever relevant as clothing remains a necessity. There is a desire among villagers to empower women with greater opportunity by establishing a stitching/sewing center in the village, allowing women to learn and enhance their skills. In the past, wool harvesting was a prevalent activity here, but currently, few are engaged in this practice. Wool is cut and sold in markets such as Halodi, Jodhpur, and Bikaner, although meat production is given priority, and wool serves as a secondary aspect in this context.

Sri Ganganagar: This northern-most city of Rajasthan is situated near the state border of Punjab and the international border with Pakistan. Often referred to as “the food basket of Rajasthan,” the region boasts fertile plains akin to those found in Punjab.

In some villages of Sri Ganganagar, embroidery is a traditional craft that has been passed down through generations. Typically, women learn this intricate art from their grandmothers, aunts, and mothers. Although embroidery may not serve as families’ primary source of income, many women engage in it as a hobby, skillfully creating intricate designs on various items such as bedsheets, pillow covers, decorated fans, and curtains. These embroidered items often find their way into dowries for daughters' weddings.

4.2 Socioeconomic context

Gender-specific issues are prevalent in these regions, with traditional and conservative mindsets limiting opportunities for women outside their households or villages. Girls are often discouraged from pursuing education or work outside the village, and the fear of girls fleeing or eloping further restricts their mobility. Instances of domestic violence are reported, but legal actions are seldom taken.

4.2.1 Overall employment landscape

In nearly all program locations (Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Sri Ganganagar, and Jodhpur), agriculture is the primary occupation (in Alwar, it is the operation of grocery stores). Many women are engaged in agriculture and MGNREGA work to earn money. However, there are some variations in crafts and other practices based on region and traditional practices.

For example, in Bikaner, women from the Meghwal community have traditionally engaged in wool cutting, which is passed down through generations. However, it is now limited to a few families who sell the wool to buyers from Bikaner market. The process of carding wool (cleaning) is performed by families owning sheep, and the spinning of wool is predominantly done by women. Stitching and embroidery, skills passed through generations, have traditionally been practiced by women (e.g., in Sri Ganganagar and Jaisalmer). However, these practices were dwindling quickly, especially among women from younger generations.

4.2.2 Financial resources

Families face financial challenges such as paying school fees and managing expenses. Loans are often taken to meet these financial obligations, and repayment is done in instalments. During the COVID-19 pandemic, some financial relief was provided to individuals through the government's "Jan Dhan" bank account scheme.

The villagers often need loans to meet various expenses, including household needs, farming, and education fees; they are typically obtained from moneylenders, with higher interest rates. Women also avail of loans from self-help groups (SHGs).

4.3 Crafts sector context

4.3.1 Crafts in different locations

Communities practice several crafts—the knowledge and skillset for which has been passed across generations—leading to community- or caste-specific craft practices. These are detailed in the following sections.

4.3.2 Crafts and the UT

This section outlines how the crafts sector in Rajasthan operated prior to the Trust's interventions, highlighting the current direction and operation of crafts work with support from the UT. Before these interventions in the sector, the main avenue for selling crafts was primarily individual buyers in villages or local fairs. The following list provides an overview of craft skills in the region and their previous means of operations:

- **Applique:** An entirely new skill taught to women.
- **Weaving**: Prior to the UT's entrance, common avenues for the sale of weaving were local fairs (*melas*), some specific to woolen products (*oon melas*), and

exporters. In recent years, organizations like the UT have played a role in introducing weaving work at a village level, whereas it was previously carried out in homes. One respondent explained, *"Weaving came here after 1985 with UT. Before that [we] also used to do weaving work. At that time, they used to cut wool at home."*

- **Spinning**: Before the UT's intervention, women would perform spinning, and their husbands or other men would sell the spun yarn. However, the income would not be passed back to the women. Since the UT's intervention, women from Chhitar Bera (Jodhpur) who mainly work with desi wool mentioned that they joined the program to utilize their free time to earn a living. A respondent from the village said, *"I was sitting at home doing nothing. By being associated with UT I could earn a living by utilizing my free time."*
- **Block printing**: Prior to the UT intervention, block printing had been practiced for many years, with artisans making sheets and selling them in local markets. However, these were durable and lasted years, leading to low repurchase, which slowed production and led to a complete halt in business. The UT is aiming to revive this incubation village and diversify its range of products.
- **Stitching**: Before the UT intervention, women sewed for themselves and earned incomes through direct orders placed by locals. Most women from Mandhan, Alwar, knew how to sew prior to training from the UT, having learned from their mothers or other people with shops of their own in the village. Before the UT program, they did not have any plans to set up shops.
- **Embroidery:** Women practiced embroidery before the UT arrived, as embroidered pieces were made primarily for their own dowry and household use. Traditionally, Muslim communities residing in Barmer and Jaisalmer and members of Meghwal, Rajput, and Chalan Jat communities practiced *mukka* embroidery.

  As explained by women of Sataiyan, Shamki, Sri Ganganagar, they have been embroidering since their childhood, making products for household use and marriages in the village. Through the UT, women expressed a desire to hone their skills and learn further techniques. One respondent explained, *"I joined UT to learn more about the techniques of embroidery. There was no provision of earning earlier. The only reason to join this was to learn new techniques."* Another respondent added that this was the first time that women in the village were commissioned to embroider; otherwise they only made cushions and bedsheets at home for personal use.

  The trainer from Sataiyan, Sri Ganganagar shared a similar experience with embroidery. She has been learning the craft since she was very young and is well-versed in techniques and patterns such as stitching, crochet, and Kashida embroidery, and UT training further supplemented her knowledge of Kashida embroidery.

The current generation of women are less keen to learn crafts. Respondents explained that instead they wish to study and gain employment in the public or private sectors. A respondent from Sri Ganganagar said that her daughter was not eager to learn embroidery: *"The present generation of girls are getting educated. They are not learning embroidery. My daughter is studying. I have been telling her to learn sewing. She does*

not know how to insert the string inside the needle. She says she would get her clothes stitched from others. She wants to study and get a job."

4.3.3 Caste and gender dynamics in crafts

Craft communities are often organized along caste lines, with specific castes specializing in particular crafts. For example, some castes may be associated with embroidery or stitching, while others may work in spinning wool. This occupational specialization is passed across generations, creating a caste-based division of labor in the sector, as well as caste-based occupational identities. In some cases, a craft may be regarded as higher in status than another, leading to social stratification and inequalities among craft communities. Caste-based divisions within craft communities can also lead to economic disparities, as some castes may have better access to resources, markets, and opportunities, while others may face challenges in accessing the same.

In Bikaner, women are actively involved in various livelihood practices, including stitching, embroidery, and wool-related crafts. In Alwar, both men and women focus primarily on stitching as their main livelihood activity. Meanwhile, in Jaisalmer, *mukka* embroidery and applique work are prominent crafts. In Jodhpur, desi wool holds significance, and in Sri Ganganagar, women are actively engaged in embroidery work.

Traditional *mukka* embroidery work is predominantly practiced by the Muslim and Meghwal communities residing in Barmer and Jaisalmer. Women from these communities come from families who settled in the region after the 1971 war, and *mukka* design holds cultural significance for those with ancestral ties to Sindh. However, the present generation is not as inclined towards continuing this work, and fewer women practice it today.

Some women within the community still dress in clothes adorned with similar designs. In the past, brides were often gifted dresses with extensive *mukka* embroidery designs, which were highly valued. Irrespective of the amount of gold or silver given as gifts, the presence of *mukka* embroidery design on the clothes was considered essential. The artistry of this embroidery was exemplified by a remarkable encounter with a 100-year-old woman who showcased a 200-year-old bed sheet made by her grandmother from Pakistan. Despite its age, the sheet showed no signs of wear and tear. The elderly woman, who was uneducated, emphasized that such craftsmanship was unparalleled, and even an engineer would struggle to replicate it. She estimated that it must have taken her grandmother a year to create such a masterpiece.

In Jaisalmer, diverse groups coexist, and each has distinctive occupational roles; Muslim communities engage in wool shearing and selling, Meghwal communities are involved in cow rearing, and woodwork is known as the domain of the Suthar caste.

4.4 The role of men and middlemen in the purchase and sale of products

Women in the program villages are involved in various economic activities such as embroidery and making cushion covers. They sell their products in markets, including local fairs and those in Jaipur. Men, and some women, travel to the market to buy necessary items for marriage. Respondents mentioned that men go to the market for groceries, while women stay at home and embroider.

Wool, which is spun in large quantities in Bikaner, also requires the help of middlemen. For instance, these men normally obtain wool from the market, distribute it to women at a specific spot in the village, collect the spun wool from the women, and deliver the finished product to the Khadi *Mandir*. Women themselves do not sell spun wool in the market. The middleman charges a commission for their services—typically five rupees per kilogram.

4.5 Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on work and livelihoods. The lockdown measures imposed during the pandemic led to a halt in various work activities, including transportation. UT operations were also impacted, as field visits were not permitted, and the community mobilizer faced difficulties in reaching out to women in the villages, resulting in limited communication through phone calls. Training sessions were interrupted, and work had to be stopped for several months, causing delays and disruptions in project timelines.

The pandemic also led to economic hardship, especially for those involved in small businesses and daily wage labor. A respondent from Hadan, Bikaner shared her experience, stating that due to the lockdown, nobody was available to collect the wool she had spun, resulting in non-payment for her work. Food shortages and ration scarcity were reported, leading to hunger and difficulties in accessing necessities. Limited availability of vegetables and market closures during the lockdown impacted people's diets, leading to reliance on pulses and dry vegetables. Some women shared that there was an increase in prices of essential commodities. The enforcement of lockdowns and strict government regulations affected people's movement, with limited freedom to leave their homes. Social distancing measures were followed, and people complied with government orders and guidelines.

Many respondents mentioned that their work was significantly impacted by COVID-19 in Jaisalmer due to transportation restrictions arising from the lockdowns. Trainings and workshops were also postponed or cancelled. People could only contact each other through phones, limiting their ability to communicate and collaborate effectively. The UT provided assistance in the form of distribution of ration kits and financial support (transfers of Rs.8,000 in three instalments to the artisans). In Bikaner, necessities were readily available for most people in the village. According to the ward member, around 70–75% of the population did not encounter any difficulties, as they had sufficient food supplies stored at home. The community also came together to support each other during this challenging time. Children had to drop out of school due to economic distress at home and as schools were also shut down.

4.6 Gender context

This section discusses the gendered norms in the region and their impact on the agency, social capital, and mobility of women. It also discusses the response, adaptation, and evolution of family members to the changes in the society. Overall, while there have been positive changes and increased empowerment in some areas, traditional gender norms and restrictions still prevail in various aspects of women's lives across these regions. In most places, women’s mobility is largely restricted. Agency and decision-

making power lie mostly with male family members, especially regarding education and marriage. Women's agency over family income is limited, and they often need permission to attend meetings or training programs. The financial contribution of women is often seen as insufficient to meet household expenses.

4.6.1 Women's mobility

Overall, women's mobility is restricted in all the districts. They are discouraged from going out at night due to safety concerns such as encountering drunk men, and superstitions such as the presence of ghosts. Adolescent girls are usually accompanied by family members for activities such as shopping. It has been highlighted that the markets generally close early in the villages, discouraging nighttime activities.

All women have bank accounts and do go to the bank if required; however, some respondents prefer to go with their husbands or family members for support. Some respondents explained that they feel safer and more comfortable in the presence of a male companion, which is considered a protective measure. For instance, a respondent from Naiguddi in Jaisalmer shared that if a husband or other family member is not available, women may hire a vehicle to travel: "*We do not go alone. We together hire a vehicle and then we go to Pokhran and Sankara."*

However, respondents' experiences varied. There were instances in which women did not need permission to travel, or they preferred to travel without a companion. Women traveled for work (wage labor) to nearby locations (e.g., Chandani and Misa Ki Dhani). Some women work in their own fields, and some in others' fields —typically those belonging to the Bishnoi and Suthar communities. They leave in the morning and return in the evening, usually carrying their food with them. Women also travel within the village for work-related tasks, such as working on nearby farms or going to neighboring villages for employment opportunities.

While women's mobility is generally limited, there is more flexibility when it comes to education. Girls are allowed to attend school alone up to a certain level, although factors such as distance, lack of siblings to accompany them, or economic constraints may prevent them from continuing their education beyond a certain point.

Concerns over women's safety and the fear of elopement or abduction were frequently voiced by family members, particularly men. The notion of *zamana kharab hai* (the world/society is not good) is commonly cited as justification for these limitations. Few women have the freedom to go out and work, and those who engage in activities or work often face social stigma and gossip from their neighbors and the larger community.

4.6.2 Household work and chores

In general, there is an expectation that daughters-in-law will perform housework and chores, while the husband's role is limited. However, there are cases that show some husbands working from home and, therefore, being available to help around the house. Moreover, there were instances in which husbands provided additional support, such as when their wives were not feeling well.

But the bulk of household work falls on women. A respondent from Bikaner discussed her daily routine, which involves working in someone else's field before returning home to complete household chores. While her sister-in-law sometimes helps, men in the

household do not typically contribute to domestic work. She acknowledged that this is a problem, and there is a need for a change in societal attitudes toward gender roles. Men's contribution to household work is limited, with some men helping with cooking, cleaning, or plucking vegetables.

Men are generally engaged in work outside the household, such as agriculture, and there is a social stigma around men doing chores in the house. Sons are less likely to help than daughters, and women face a lack of time to pursue activities they are interested in, like embroidery.

4.6.3 Self-efficacy

During the interviews, many women mentioned the advantages they gained from coming together as a collective to work in a CIG. The women in the community have learned how to deposit and withdraw money from the bank, highlighting their ability to learn the operations and functions of a bank account, and their financial literacy.

Women involved in embroidery work have a process for setting the price of their products, which also involves consensus-building. The group leader is responsible for conveying the price to the committee; this process ensures that everyone involved in the embroidery work is satisfied with the price they receive for their labor. The leaders feel more confident due to the exposure offered by the work. The collective leader from one village expressed her belief that women can do embroidery work on their own if given the necessary knowledge and training.

She also noted that many women in the community earn a modest income and would be willing to work for higher wages if given the opportunity. She explained that being a leader has led her to become more confident and speak up more often. Another respondent also mentioned that since joining a UT group, her hesitation has diminished, and she feels more confident speaking in front of others.

Many women mentioned that they do not possess adequate knowledge about starting a business or undertaking related purchases. They expressed a willingness to learn and receive training to be able to start their own ventures. They also mentioned barriers they face, such as lack of access to transportation, which makes it difficult for them to travel to the city and sell their products.

4.6.4 Autonomy and decision-making

Women generally lacked agency to make decisions about their household expenditure. In most households in Jodhpur and Alwar, women had to seek permission from their husbands or in-laws before spending money; in many cases, men also decide how to spend women’s own income. Decisions regarding marriage are primarily made by family heads, and women become involved in the process at a later stage. In some cases, however, decisions regarding children’s education were made jointly by both husband and wife.

4.6.5 Social capital

Working together enables women to meet their friends and share their issues and grievances with each other. Most women said that they only have friends within the village, as they are unable to travel outside to meet anyone. Women in Bikaner mostly interact with each other while traveling to fields or at social events such as weddings or

satsangs [spiritual gatherings]. Some women meet their neighbors to share their woes, while others share them with sisters-in-law.

Some respondents mentioned that they meet up in groups every two to three months and share their grievances while working (spinning wool). In some cases, they also share personal matters with the *vyavasthapak*.

Being a part of Rangsutra and URMUL groups has enabled women to interact more with each other regarding work and other matters, opening up a world outside of their families. Similarly, many women in the villages of Sri Ganganagar mentioned that they became engaged with URMUL through their connections with other women. Most respondents joined the groups due to the influence of their friends or relatives.

Some women also mentioned that they formed groups to talk about money and savings; this activity was mainly conducted under a scheme initiated by the *panchayat*, wherein a man would visit and provide information about loans. Women mentioned instances of singing songs while doing embroidery work together, which offered them some levity and were a source of bonding. Even when the scheme ended, women visited each other and sat in groups to work alongside each other.

4.7 Implementation barriers and facilitators

This section highlights the challenges and facilitators of project implementation, as reported by participants and program staff during baseline data collection.

4.7.1 Barriers

Mobilizing participants

The intersection of caste and gender roles presents unique challenges to mobilizing women in some clusters—especially the spinning cluster. Women from dominant caste communities, such as Rajput, opted out of spinning work, preferring to do stitching which required them to work from home. As a result, spinning work remains confined primarily to the Meghwal and Muslim communities. The majority of women in the training group were from the Meghwal community, which is primarily involved in wool cutting. However, it was observed that women from other communities, such as Naik, Muslims, and others, were also present during the training. According to a staff member, this limited participation slowed the mobilization process, affecting the program's outreach and inclusivity.

Wage rates and order consistency

Wage rate-related issues pose a concern, as some women felt that the rate societies offered was unfair. As mentioned earlier, some women in an FGD expressed their dissatisfaction with the low wage rates. Women CIG members are dependent on the UT for information on fair wages and the current wage rate in the market, which implies that the rates aren’t decided by the women independently. The UT and society managers have a significant influence on the wage-setting process for CIGs.

However, some women in another FGD mentioned that they set the product rates themselves, indicating some discrepancy in wage-setting practices across CIGs in different districts. Some women also described an improvement in wages after joining the collective. However, other participants say there has been no change in ten years.

Further, in FGDs in Bikaner, Sri Ganganagar, and Jaisalmer, it was reported that the frequency of orders was inconsistent. A lack of regular orders poses a major sales challenge and affects women's ability to rely on embroidery or craft work as a stable source of income. One woman in Sri Ganganagar stated that with more consistent orders, she would prefer embroidery work over working in the fields due to the convenience of working from home and the potential for higher earnings.

In Bikaner, participants described attrition from the UT, as some women opted to join Rangsutra for better pay and more consistent orders. However, since most Rangsutra work occurs in a factory, some women chose to stay with the UT due to the flexibility of working from home. There was contradictory information from interviews on meeting order deadlines. While most participants claim they can manage it, UT staff mentioned that women often fail to bring the work on time, which affects the timely delivery and consistency of orders.

Availability of alternate sources of employment

Another critical issue affecting participation is the high attrition rate during the harvest season and periods of other guaranteed work, such as MGNREGA employment. The dropout rate increases significantly during these periods, with attrition reaching as high as 10%, according to UT staff members. To address staffing challenges, a *vyavasthapak* is designated during the training process at the incubation stage to coordinate attendance and ensure orders are completed.

Some members also complained during interviews about compensation loss due to trainings. They were not reimbursed for lost wages or the cost of food during trainings. This lack of compensation impacted their motivation to attend the trainings.

Changing aspirations of young girls

There is a perception that crafts are not a viable means of earning money, as the current generation of women is less interested in learning traditional crafts such as embroidery. Many women in Sri Ganganagar said their daughters will prioritize education and aspire to get jobs, rather than pursuing craft skills.

In Jaisalmer, women in the next generation do not aspire to learn *mukka* embroidery, in part due to low perceived value relative to the health costs of such a labor-intensive process. There is also less demand among the younger generation for *mukka*-embroidered clothes, as they are not always in sync with current fashion trends which they want to emulate. These perceptions pose challenges to sustaining interest and participation in traditional crafts.

Sectoral challenges

Power looms have led to declining profit margins in the weaving sector, as they can produce textiles at a faster rate and compete with handloom products in terms of cost and efficiency. According to one staff member, the production cycle for most products is relatively long, making it difficult to scale up production to meet demand.

Exposure to the entire value chain

In trainings conducted by the UT, women artisans are not taught to buy thread and other raw materials from the market, or to sell their products directly in the market. The *vyavasthapak* is the only woman in the CIG who negotiates with buyers. She also

participates in group meetings for *vyavasthapaks* where she is exposed to other value-chain activities and wage rates, among other things.

Exposure visits for other CIG women are much fewer and less frequent, and are not usually available to all members. The raw material is usually provided directly to the women because buyers are very particular about the quality of the material used; they prefer that the cooperative societies or women artisans are not in charge of procuring materials, as they are skeptical about the quality of the material they choose.

These limitations are due to the UT's policies on trainings, the already-established roles and responsibilities of the different actors in the value chain, and the context and norms of the society. This makes it difficult to empower women to participate in all aspects of the value chain. While there is a desire to work towards women's capacity-building, ensuring financial sustainability takes precedence over mitigating biased gender and social norms. The UT, however, is trying to reverse this trend.

Challenges in the implementation of trainings and meetings

Challenges in the implementation of trainings and meetings have emerged as hurdles for the project, impacting the effectiveness of skill-development initiatives. In Alwar, one of the primary challenges is the presence of inexperienced trainers. The absence of external trainers and reliance on UT staff and elder artisans from the village (who have practiced the craft for many years) has resulted in training sessions that do not fully cover the topics as outlined in training materials.

Restrictive social and gender norms

Restrictive social and gender norms pose significant barriers to women's participation in the project across all five districts. In many cases, women face difficulties in leaving home to attend training sessions due to their primary-caregiver responsibilities and household chores. The need to consult with family members before traveling further hinders their ability to participate. Community norms around gender roles in the value chain also challenge women's participation.

In Alwar, women engaged in stitching reported being harassed by men for leaving their houses to work. This reflects the prevailing belief that women should stay at home and fulfill their domestic duties (as described in an FGD). Even in cases where household family members are supportive, neighbors sometimes raise objections or harass women working outside their homes. In Bikaner, many women cited community fears of women eloping with boys (*jamana kharab*) as a source of restriction on their mobility, and some may refrain from sending girls to school outside of the village for fear of their elopement and resultant dishonor to the family.

Alcoholism and domestic violence also pose challenges to women's participation, as reported by enumerators. Community gatekeepers perpetuate bias by discouraging women from going out alone, reinforcing double standards for men and women. Women less proficient in embroidery are required to travel to a trainer's house for work, which may create an additional barrier to participation for those already constrained by their relatively lower skills. These examples underscore the deeply entrenched, restrictive norms that hinder women's agency and limit their opportunities to participate in training and work.

Gendered division of labor in value chain activities
Weaving work is traditionally undertaken by men; creating women-only groups for weaving continues to be a challenge, according to a UT staff member in Bikaner. One weaving cluster mobilized women whose husbands or family members already practiced weaving, so they knew the value-chain activities.

Even for other crafts, it was observed that activities such as selling and procurement, which lead to exposure, are often performed by men. The role of women is restricted to activities such as embroidery and stitching applique.

Health concerns
There were concerns expressed regarding the detrimental health effects of embroidery. Focusing on fine details for extended periods can strain the eyes and lead to discomfort, headaches, and back and neck pain.

4.7.2 Facilitators
Facilitators of program implementation play a crucial role in supporting and enhancing the program's success.

Exposure to work undertaken by other societies
Vyavasthapaks from various CIGs attend meetings, which also makes them aware of work undertaken by the societies, as well as the value chain, wage rates for different crafts, and the potential for upskilling. They inform women in the CIGs about these activities, which enables them to collectivize and potentially demand training, among other things. For instance, women from craft clusters practicing applique demanded training in embroidery since it was beneficial for them. Thus, the collectives, along with the exposure offered by the *vyavasthapak*, enable women to demand trainings.

Flexibility of location and time for work
One key facilitator of implementation is the opportunity for women to work from home, which has been extensively highlighted as an advantage by participants across all districts. Such flexibility allows women to circumvent mobility challenges and effectively balance their household responsibilities with embroidery work. Working from home enables them to participate in the program even when they have limited time available during the day, thereby making it a practical and convenient option.

This aspect is particularly significant in comparison to other organizations doing similar work, which mandate that women must work at a central location for a fixed number of hours, which may not be feasible for many women. By offering the option to work from home, the UT remains competitive and attracts women who value such flexibility in their work arrangements.

Wages are contingent on the amount of work done by the women, which is allotted to them by the *vyavasthapak*. Many times, women manage their orders based on their needs (e.g., they request a larger order from the *vyavasthapak* if there is a dire need for money in the family).

However, it is worth noting that while the women enjoy this flexibility, the quality of products is different when the work is done at the center as compared to the home. The UT management team mentioned several advantages of working from a workspace, including:

- **Peer learning**: Women learn from each other and from the supervisor.
- **Better quality of products**: Their payment won't be deducted if they dirty the product; their quality is better in general if they work at the center.
- **Increase in awareness**: At the CIG level, they are also provided with information on health and other education. ASHA and *anganwadi* workers connected with government schemes provide orientation on health issues and distribute free sanitary pads. The women are also supported in updating their Aadhaar card (ID card) and connecting to open schooling. Coming together at the CIG level has motivated some women to take up class 10 or class 12 exams.

Familiarity with the UT's work, which leads to trust in the community
Another essential facilitator of program implementation is long-term engagement within communities. The UT's extended presence in most villages, and having built a strong reputation and trust over several years, has created a solid foundation for driving social change. This long-term engagement fosters deeper connections with the communities and enhances the program's impact beyond specific interventions. Trust built over time allows the UT to effectively collaborate with community members and address their unique needs and aspirations, resulting in a more sustainable and culturally sensitive approach.

Prior experience in the craft is also an asset for the project. The UT works closely with women who have a long history of working in their traditional craft, and relies on them to serve as leaders, mentors, and trainers across all districts.

Embedding sustainability through a cascading model of training
In most cases, the UT selects trainers from the existing artisan community. In consolidation— and sometimes in the incubation stage as well—the field staff identifies artisans from the community with a certain skill set, willingness to travel to other villages, and communication and leadership skills. The experienced person who is selected goes through a training-of-trainers module, and then provides training to other artisans. This cascading model of training is a good way to ensure its sustainability by embedding it within the community. It also gives artisans a sense of ownership towards the work, hones their skills, and recognizes them as mentors.

Access to information on government services and other types of support
As mentioned earlier, in addition to crafts and production-related trainings, the UT informs women artisans about health facilities available to them—such as eye camps, primary and community health centers, hospitals, and vaccination centers. This helps to address the general health issues, eye problems, or back pain-related issues from crafts work, in addition to informing them about menstrual health, and other government schemes they can avail of (e.g., pensions, loans, artisan cards, employment, educational facilities). These awareness sessions usually take place informally during the course of the crafts and production trainings. An *anganwadi* worker in Bikaner mentioned that the UT used to set up vaccination camps and medical treatment centers in villages as part of their interventions. One ward member explained that he was extremely appreciative of the UT because they had converted barren land to grazing land for animals.

5. Recommendations

Exposure of women artisans to all aspects of the value chain; improved wage-setting practices

In order to empower women, it is important to train or even expose them to all activities in the value chain, including procurement, marketing, sales and negotiation. Currently, only the *vyavasthapak* interacts with buyers and travels to Bikaner or society offices. It could be beneficial to make the post of the *vyavasthapak* rotational so that other CIG members can be exposed to more information on wage rates and the value chains of different crafts. The cascading training model can be applied here as well.

Some women artisans spoke about wage rates being low and not changing in line with increasing prices for raw materials and overall inflation over the years. Exposing women to market rates, wage rates, and other information might help them to feel equipped to decide CIG wage rates independently. It might also help to reduce attrition when alternative sources of employment are available.

Provision of compensation for wage loss, transport facilities, and refreshments for artisans during trainings

Most artisans hail from lower castes with low-income and disadvantaged households. Wages are critical for everyday expenses. Many artisans had difficulty with attending trainings, especially those which continued for ten days, since they felt it led to wage loss. It is important that some compensation (proportionate to wages lost), is provided to them to prevent them from dropping out from the trainings. It is also important to explain the long-term advantages of these trainings, including better skills, higher wages, and proficiency at work, which can motivate them to attend. Providing transport facilities if the training is in another village or town, as well as refreshments or meals, are other ways to incentivize women to attend the trainings.

Facilitating connections with other CIGs and clusters

Currently, women in different CIGs do not interact with each other. Connecting them through occasional meetings would provide opportunities to learn from each other. The UT currently facilitates such meetings for *vyavasthapaks*, which has been advantageous for them. Peer learning through such meetings and collectivization can go a long way in fostering social capital and efficacy among women artisans.

Awareness-generation sessions with family members and providing childcare support services

Many women mentioned that they find it difficult to work from the CIG or production center. This is because traditionally, women artisans have never left the house for work; thus, there is little or no acceptance of this from family members. It could be beneficial for the UT to conduct awareness sessions with family members to help them understand the benefits of working from a work shed, such as better health, productivity, efficiency, and income for the women.

Additionally, the provision of a creche in the work shed for artisans' children could prove to be helpful, ensuring that women without a support system at home can bring their children to work. Research also indicates that spreading community awareness, especially through influential members of the community, can lead to changes in social norms (Cornwall 2016; Quisumbing, Meinzen-Dick, and Malapit 2022).

6. Conclusion

This report discusses the UT's implementation model, the program's various crafts and their value-chain activities, and the socioeconomic and cultural contexts that influence implementation. There are a variety of crafts practiced in Rajasthan, including applique, tie and dye, embroidery (including *mukka* embroidery), weaving (including dhurrie weaving), block printing, and stitching. This report brings to the fore barriers to this work such as stringent social and gender norms; competing demands on women's time from home, as well as agricultural labor work; and declining interest in pursuing crafts work, especially for crafts with lesser demand or lower wage rates.

Under the Swashakt program, the UT is implementing interventions in villages across Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Alwar, Sri Ganganagar, and Nagaur. Village-level CIGs are categorized under three stages—incubation, consolidation, and scale—based on the level of maturity of the artisans in the village and the length of time for which they have been associated with the UT.

Various trainings are provided to each CIG based on their stage of maturity, with the objective of enhancing the skills, design, and awareness levels of women engaged in these crafts. These range from support to enhance capabilities and skills, to improve access to technology, knowledge, and design, and to improve access to finance and markets. While production of some crafts is undertaken at a work shed level, with artisans coming together to work, for others it takes place at the household level. Most of the trainers are artisans themselves, thus ensuring the sustainability of the model.

The UT is also taking other steps to ensure scale up and sustainability of their work, such as establishing and scaling up Marugandha Crafts and Agri Food Private Limited. The company was conceptualized and started two to three years ago with the aim of creating a single brand for the craft products of Western Rajasthan while also creating a single platform through which products made by all societies can reach the market.

There is also an effort to revive crafts like *mukka* embroidery through renewed marketing and branding techniques under the Swashakt program. These crafts are slowly dying out, as they are practiced by specific communities with no uptake from the younger generation because earnings are not commensurate with the effort and time required. A further measure to ensure the model's sustainability is the appointment of trainers who are artisans and members of the villages themselves.

Given the context in which it works, the UT faces several challenges during the implementation process, including restrictive gender and social norms, and sectoral challenges such as the growth of power looms. Women, despite being artisans themselves, are not involved in other aspects of production such as procurement, marketing, and selling. It is important to note that changing gender and social norms, and behavior change among the larger community, are both time- and resource-intensive processes.

This report also highlights the importance of addressing issues related to order consistency, access to information, wage fairness, and adapting to changing aspirations of the current generation to ensure the viability and sustainability of the URMUL program. The recommendations section above touches upon some possible ways in

which the program could be made more sustainable, as well as geared towards improving women's empowerment outcomes. Some of these include facilitating awareness sessions for family members, providing compensation for wage loss during trainings, ensuring women are exposed to different aspects of the value chain, and fair wage rates decided by the women to minimize dropout.

Appendix A: Tools

A. Incubation stage

1. FGD/IDI with artisans (members and non-members)

This tool is for women who are not leaders of collectives.

(Note: This tool will also be used for IDIs with women members and non-members. More probes will be added.)

Name of the researcher:
Name of the respondent:
Name of the collective:
Year joined the collective:
State:
District:
Town:
Ward:
Date of interview:
Place of interview:
Discussion start time:

Background and context (for members and non-members)

1. Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your family? [Probe: info on age, number of children and their ages, education and husband's education. Do the children/husband live with you? If your husband doesn't live with you, where is he? Has he gone for work? How long does he usually go for? Are there elderly people who live with you? If you have asked women to gather from outside the village, ask which village they are from.
2. What does your husband do for a living? [Probe: Is there any other source from which your family earns income? How many members earn an income? How many contribute to running the household?]
3. Do you engage in any work from which you earn an income, however small it may be? [Probe: If she says no, ask "Ok, but last year did you get any money of your own?"] What work do you do and how much do you earn? [If she names more than one earning source, ask her which is the one that gave her higher income. Let the choice of unit be the respondent's. In other words, she may give you monthly income or annual income. Be sure to be clear about the time unit.]
4. Are you engaged in any crafts related work (including wood/bamboo/other handloom/handicraft)?

   (NOTE: if the answer is no, skip questions 5 to 16)

   If yes, which craft? Are you doing this for income generation purposes? How did you learn this skill? How much time, on average, do you spend on this activity? Last year, how much income did your household get from this activity? How much did YOU earn from these activities?

5. Is [x] craft a part of your family/community tradition? How many generations in your husband's family has practiced this? Was your father's family also involved in [x] craft?
6. Let's now talk about the [x] craft work you do. Which activity are you mainly involved in? For how long have you been involved in the activity? How did you learn how to do the activity?

7. When you started doing the [x] craft work, what kind of activities did you do? What activities do you do now? Has there been any change in the kind of activities that you do in the past five years? If yes, what has changed?
8. How much of your time are you able to give to [x] craft-related activities? Can you describe your usual day to me? How do you manage household/domestic work (like cleaning or cooking) and the crafts work? [Probe: Does the husband/sons/daughters help in household work, or the crafts work you do? Who helps and with what tasks?] [FAMILY SUPPORT]
9. In the past, have you been part of any kind of training or course? What was the training about? Have you ever received training on [x] craft/allied activities/ business/marketing sales? Who gave these trainings? Are there any trainings that you have had to pay for? Did you find them useful? If so, how? If not, why not? [SKILLS DEVELOPMENT]
10. Have you ever tried to take a loan for craft-related work when you needed it? What was your experience like, irrespective of whether you got the loan? [Probe: how easy/difficult is it to get a loan for this purpose?]
11. Have you received any support from government schemes/subsidies for your craft work? What were these schemes and how helpful have they been? Do you think that existing supports are adequate?
12. What are your main sources for any information on [x] craft? Who would you go to if you needed information on the [x] craft-related things? [Probe: role of government, other NGOs, internet]
13. Did you sell any outputs from your craft work in the market in the last year? If yes, can you tell us which markets you sold your products in last year? [Probe: how much did you sell in the local markets and in urban/online markets? Who were your buyers?] [ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND MARKETS]
14. How do you access raw materials? Which markets do you buy raw materials from? [Probe: Do different raw materials have different markets? What do they buy locally versus outside? For members ask: how does the collective help you to access raw materials?] [ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND MARKETS]
15. Do you use any technology as part of your craft-related work? If not, who uses the machines?
16. What are the main challenges that crafts persons are facing today? What are specific problems women in the crafts sector face? What can be done to alleviate the challenges you face?
17. Do you have access to the internet? Do you know how to use the internet? [TECHNOLOGY]
18. What do most households in your village do for a living? How important are [x] craft activities for the households in your village?
19. In your village, what is the attitude of people towards women working? Are women usually allowed to work for income-generating purposes for someone else outside the house? [Probe: If a woman gets a job in a town or nearby village, and she must commute every day, do you think her family will be okay with it?] [MOBILITY]
20. Do you usually go out of the house on your own to the market/work/to meet friends/for social functions often? If yes, where do you go? If yes, do you feel confident doing so? If not, what are some of your concerns? Does anybody at home have an issue? What mode of transport do you usually use? Would you consider your village to be a safe place for women? [MOBILITY]
21. How often in a day do you interact with people who are not your family members? Are these interactions social in nature or for work? Who are the individuals you meet most frequently for work-related matters (not necessarily wool-related)? [Probe: Do you talk to or socialize with women? How did you meet these women? How were the bonds formed? Do you feel like you can reach out to these women in times of need? Are there any other people in the village you look to for any kind of help or advice or when you want someone to talk to?] [SOCIAL CAPITAL]

URMUL program (for members)

1. Had you heard of URMUL before you joined the collective? Are any other family members part of an URMUL collective in any other village? Have you ever been a part of a collective before? If yes, what kind of collective? How was the experience at this previous collective? What are your expectations from being part of the URMUL collective? Why did you decide to join the URMUL collective? What do you think will be the main advantages/benefits of joining the URMUL collective? How much time would you be willing to put in for trainings and other collective activities? Would you be willing to travel outside the village for trainings or other work as part of the collective? [Probe: volume of sales, incomes/more skills?]
2. Before joining the URMUL collective, were you involved in selling any products (crafts products) in the market? If yes, how were you selling your products up until now? Who was the buyer? What about prices? How were you deciding the prices? How did you negotiate? Do you think negotiating for better prices will be easier once you join the collective? [COLLECTIVE BARGAINING]
3. What kind of support with respect to your craft work do you expect from the collective?
4. Would you feel comfortable becoming a leader of the group? Why or why not? What would help you to feel more confident?
5. What do your family members think about you being part of the collective? What do they see as an advantage to you being a member? Did anyone resist when you wanted to join the collective? What made them change their mind? [FAMILY SUPPORT]

   Only for non-members: Why is it that you are not part of the URMUL collective? [Probe: did you want to join? Were you not eligible? Did you have no interest in joining? Did you have information about URMUL? Were you approached by them?] Is anyone else from the family part of a craft collective? What are the main advantages/benefits from collectives? What are the main disadvantages of collectives?

2. KII with community gatekeeper

(Note: This tool is for individuals [could be village head/*anganwadi* worker/any influential member in the community/value-chain actor] who can speak about the village context and societal barriers to participating in the URMUL program.)

Name of the researcher:
Name of the respondent:
Name of the collective:
Year joined the collective:
State:
District:
Town:
Ward:
Date of interview:
Place of interview:
Discussion start time:

Background and context

1. Are you from this village originally? If not, where did you grow up?
2. How long have you been in your role as _____?

Now we want to ask you some questions about this village.

3. What is the main source of income for most households in this location? (Note: ask

occupation for both men and women.) What would you say is the average monthly household income in the village?
4. Do men usually migrate to urban areas in search of employment?
5. Does your village have instances of violence against women or instances of caste violence? Please tell us more.
6. What are the challenges and issues that come up on a regular basis within the village? [Probe: could be water/caste conflict/lack of work/agriculture-related issues, etc.]
7. What is the craft traditionally practiced by the communities in these regions?
8. What are some of the challenges faced by communities practicing this craft in these regions? [Probe: declining profits, less demand, lack of skilled labor]

Social norms and community change

1. What is the typical age of marriage for women and men in your village? Do households practice purdah? Do underage marriages happen in your village? Do you do anything to prevent the same?
2. Were any steps taken to prevent such practices?
3. Do the women in the village work for someone outside their household for income-generating purposes? If so, what are the different kinds of work they are involved in?
4. Was this always the case? Were women always working outside their homes to earn an income? If no, how did this change come about over time?

URMUL program

1. **[Village head only]** Have any other women's collectives been set up in the village? What about crafts collectives? Have there been any crafts trainings in the village? If yes, who were they organized by? How and when did you first come to know about URMUL and the work they do in the crafts sector? Did the URMUL team approach you to get buy-in from the community? If yes, what was your initial reaction when people of URMUL came and spoke to you about training women in crafts and eventually employing members from community (women) in the craft collectives? [Probe: Were you in favor of women going for trainings to nearby villages or working outside the home in general, or were you hesitant? Why or why not? Do you think women's capacity-building programs/women working outside their homes helps your community in any way?]
2. Did the community (or you) need to be convinced to accept women and their choice to attend trainings and join these collectives? What has the reaction of the community been? What challenges are you facing in the process? How do you plan to overcome these challenges?
3. As a _____, what role do you play in advocating change among the community?
4. Were there any awareness-generation activities to promote URMUL's work? If so, who was responsible for conducting these initiatives?
5. **[Village head only]** Have you supported or helped women wanting to start their own venture through funding/provision of space for training, etc.?

Power relations

1. In your view, if a woman starts working outside the house and earning her own money, what are the advantages and disadvantages? [AGENCY AND INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING]
2. Do women in the village participate in community meetings (gram sabha)? Do you encourage participation of women during community meetings/*panchayat* meetings? If yes, how do you encourage them and ensure the same? How do the women feel about actively participating in these village meetings? [CONFIDENCE, AGENCY AND INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING]

3. How do male community members feel about women's active participation in these meetings?
4. What changes do you see among the women after they've started working outside the house and earning an income? [Probe: more participation, more involvement in decision-making, etc.] Do you think gender dynamics have changed in any way in the village? If so, how?
5. Do you have any women role models from the village [Any woman you look up to in the village who has broken various social norms such as stigma around women working and achieving financial security]? If yes, are these women celebrated? If yes, how? If not, what prevents you from celebrating or talking about their journeys?

COVID-19

1. What was the impact of COVID-19 on livelihood opportunities for people in the village?
2. What kinds of challenges did they face? What challenges did women working in the crafts sector face? How did it impact them?
3. Do you think that women will be more willing to be a part of the craft collectives set up by URMUL because of the way COVID impacted their lives?

B. Consolidation and scale stage

1. FGD/IDI with artisans (members and non-members)

(Note: This tool will also be used for IDIs with women members and non-members. More probes will be added.)

Name of the researcher:
Name of the respondent:
Name of the collective:
Year joined the collective:
State:
District:
Town:
Ward:
Date of interview:
Place of interview:
Discussion start time:

Background and context (for members and non-members)

1. Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your family? [Probe: info on age, number of children and their ages, education and husband's education. Do the children/husband live with her? If not, where is he? Has he gone for work? How long does he usually go for? Are there elderly people who live with her? If you have asked women to gather from outside the village, ask which village they are from.]
2. What does your husband do for a living? [Probe: Is there any other source from which the family earns income? How many members earn an income? How many contribute to running the household?]
3. Do you do any work from which you earn an income, however small it may be? [Probe: If she says no, ask "Ok, but last year did you get any money of your own?"]

   What work do you do and how much do you earn? [If she names more than one earning source, ask her which provides her with a higher income. Let the choice of unit be the respondent's: she may give you monthly or annual income. Be sure to be clear about the time unit.]

   Last year, how much income did your household get from stitching/block printing/embroidery/wool-related work (cleaning, shearing, carding of raw wool, upkeep of sheep)? [Note: mention which craft]

   How much did YOU earn from these activities? [INCOME]

4. Is [x] craft a part of your family/community tradition? How many generations in your husband's family have practiced this? Was your father's family also involved in [x] craft? Are women also traditionally involved in the craft? If yes, has this always been the case? If both are involved, what are the different activities done by each?
5. Let's now talk about the [x] craft work you do. Which activity are you mainly involved in? For how long have you been involved in the activity? How did you learn how to do the activity?
6. When you started doing the [x] craft work, what kind of activities did you do? What activities do you do now? Has there been any change in the kind of activities that you do in the past five years? If yes, what has changed?
7. When there is an order, how much of your time are you able to give to [x] craft-related activities? Can you describe your usual day to me? How do you manage household work

and the wool work? [Probe: Do the husband/sons/daughters help in household work? Who helps and with what tasks?] [FAMILY SUPPORT]

8. What do most households in your village do for a living? How important are [x] craft activities for the households in your village?
9. In your village, what is the attitude of people towards women working? Are women allowed to leave their homes to work? If a woman gets a job in a town or a nearby village, and she has to commute every day, do you think her family will be okay with it? Would you consider your village to be a safe place for women? [Probe: Can young unmarried women go wherever they want within the village? Accompanied or unaccompanied?] [MOBILITY]
10. Do you usually go out of the house on your own to the market/to work/meet friends/attend social functions often? If yes, do you feel confident doing so? If not, what are some of your concerns? Does anybody at home have an issue? What mode of transport do you usually use? Before joining the collective, did you go out often? Has your confidence increased now? Has the attitude of your family changed? [MOBILITY]
11. How much say do women have in decisions taken by the household? Do you feel confident participating in household decision-making? Do you feel like your opinion holds value? Has the extent of your involvement changed since you joined the collective? [AGENCY AND DECISION-MAKING]
12. How often in a day do you interact with people who are not your family members – people in your village or from nearby villages? Are these interactions social in nature or for work? Who are the individuals you meet most frequently for work-related matters (not necessarily craft related)? [Probe: Do you talk to or socialize with women? How did you meet these women? How were the bonds formed? Do you feel like you can reach out to these women in times of need? Are there any other people in the village you look to for any kind of help or advice or when you want someone to talk to?] [SOCIAL CAPITAL]

URMUL program (for women members; for non-members only if they are part of a collective other than URMUL)

1. When did you join this collective? How did you learn about it and what motivated you to join it? Are any of your family members part of an URMUL collective in any other village?
2. What were your expectations from the collective when you joined it? And what were the benefits/advantages that you received after joining the collective? [Probe: volume of sales/ income/more skills.] Did you practice the craft before joining the collective? If yes, was it to sell the output in the market or for personal use?
3. Do you think there is any change in the quality of raw material that you are using now compared to when you had just joined the collective? Did the collective help you procure any raw materials in bulk or negotiate for better prices or quality? [COLLECTIVE BARGAINING]
4. Do you think that the collective has been able to help you and other members to:
   a. Deal better with middlemen? How? [CONFIDENCE]
   b. Reduce production and transportation costs? [COSTS]
   c. Reduce the risks in production? [RISK-SHARING]
5. What fields would you like the collective to prioritize in the future?
6. Do you aspire to become a leader or reach an important position in the collective? Why or why not? If not, then is there anything that would help you feel more confident to take up leadership positions?
7. Can you describe to us how decisions are taken in the collective? As a general member, how valued are your inputs in the decision-making? Do some members have more power and influence than others? Why? Do you feel confident voicing your opinions when decisions are being made? [AGENCY AND DECISION-MAKING]
8. What do your family members think about you being part of the collective? Did you

discuss it with your family before joining the collective? What was their reaction? Did your family object to or support you joining? What do they perceive as the advantage of you being a member? Did anyone resist when you wanted to join the collective? What made them change their mind? [FAMILY SUPPORT]

Information on the craft (for members and non-members)

1. Are you associated with any middleman/trader/producer? For how long have you had this association? How did you come to be associated with him/her? How does he/she help you in your [x] craft business? [Probe: apart from giving orders/raw materials, etc., are there other aspects in which you receive their help such as credit for consumption, children's education, etc.?]

   What are the advantages of being associated with them? What are the disadvantages of being associated with them?
2. What are your main sources for any information on [x] craft? Who would you go to if you needed information on [x] craft-related things? [Probe: role of government, other NGOs, internet]
3. Could you please describe to us the entire value chain starting from getting an order to making the sale? Let's start with receiving an order. Who brings the order to you? Then what is done? [For each step probe: who did this? What is your involvement in this step? What activities do men do? What activities do women do? Can you describe these? [VALUE CHAIN]
4. Have women, over time, started doing activities that men used to traditionally do? Was there any backlash from the community or the men in particular? If this hasn't happened, how do you think women can get more involved in all the activities that men are involved in? What can be done to facilitate this? If given an opportunity and with adequate training, how much of these masculine roles can you take up? [GENDER NORMS]
5. Can you tell us what markets you sold your products in last year? [Probe: how much did you sell in the local markets and in urban/online markets? Who were your largest buyers? How do you market your products?] [ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND MARKETS]
6. How do you access raw materials? From which markets do you buy raw materials? [Probe: Do different raw materials have different markets? What do they buy locally versus outside? For members ask: how does the collective help you to access raw materials?] [ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND MARKETS]
7. How has technology [in whichever craft they are involved in] changed in the last ten years? Do you use any technology? If not, who uses the machines?

   Only for members: How has the collective helped you to access new technology? Can you name some of the changes you are aware of that you are not using? If you were to be trained in these technologies, how confident do you feel to be able to use them? If no, why not? Do you have access to the internet? Do you know how to use the internet? [TECHNOLOGY]
8. In the past, have you been part of any kind of training or course? What was the training about? Have you ever received training on [x] craft/allied activities/ business/marketing sales? Who gave these trainings? Are there any trainings that you have had to pay for? Did you find them useful? If so, how? If not, why not? Do you feel you require training on any other subject? Do you think that more women from the village should be provided with similar trainings? [SKILLS DEVELOPMENT]
9. Does the collective have a bank account? Who has access to the account? Who interacts with bank officials? Does everyone also have individual bank accounts? Can you access your bank account on your own?

Have you ever tried to take a loan for your [x] craft business when you needed it? What was your experience like, irrespective of whether you got the loan? [Probe: how easy/difficult is it to get a loan?]

10. Have you received any support from government schemes/subsidies from your [x] craft businesses? What were these schemes and how helpful have they been? Do you think that existing supports are adequate?
11. What are the main challenges that crafts persons are facing today? What are specific problems women in the crafts sector face? What can be done to alleviate the constraints you face?
12. How has COVID affected your business? Have you had any losses? [Probe: low orders/ unable to meet orders/unable to find workers/ unable to sell] How did URMUL support you during this time? What changes have you made to your production process since COVID? Has there been any change in your marketing and sales strategy/ production technology/ type of products?

2. IDI with *vyavasthapak*Name of the researcher:

Name of the respondent:
Name of the collective:
Year joined the collective:
State:
District:
Town:
Ward:
Date of interview:
Place of interview:
Discussion start time:

Background and context

1. We want to understand more about you, your background, and your association with URMUL Crafts (or the specific URMUL organization). Could you please tell us a bit about yourself? [Probe: age, education, household's main source of livelihood] How long have you been part of this collective? How did you come to be a part of the collective? Did someone from the URMUL team come to your village to promote it/ask you to join? When was the collective formed? What is the main/primary craft that the collective is involved in? Is the collective involved in multiple crafts? If so, what are they? What kind of crafts were practiced initially and what did it/they expand into? How many members are part of the collective? Are men also part of the collective? If yes, how many men and women?
2. What is your current position in the collective? How long have you held this position?
3. What are your current responsibilities within the collective? How have your work/responsibilities changed since you became a _____? Are you still involved in crafts activities or only the managerial aspects now?
4. How has holding _____ position in the collective impacted your life? Are you more confident now? Do you think you have more freedom now to move around in the village and outside the village? Do you think you are now more involved in decision-making at the household level? What about at the community level? Do you think that you have a greater say in decision-making in the collective? What about decisions pertaining to day-to-day operations of the collective?

Organizational structure

(Note to researchers: Please obtain an organizational chart of the collective with designations and the overall structure.)

1. Could you please describe the governance structure of the collective? Who in the collective is responsible for taking important decisions regarding the collective? The leadership/leaders of the collective have a very diverse role to play. What, according to you, is the most important aspect of this role?
2. Who are the key people in the collective you depend on for its functioning and management? Do you think that you have all the information you need to be able to carry out your roles and responsibilities as _____ in the collective? What are your key sources of information to understand your role, powers etc.?
3. Could you please describe how key decisions are made in the collective? Are these decisions taken based on group consensus or by key members in the collective? [Probe: Who takes what decision? What decisions are usually taken by the CEO? Which decisions are taken as a group?] On an average, how much time does it take for decisions to be taken? Do you think that there are certain factors that affect the time it takes to arrive at decisions in the collective? What, according to you, are the main factors affecting decision-making in the collective? Are these factors internal or external to the group? What is working well in the decision-making process in your collective?
4. [This question must be context-specific] Can you describe how the BoD works with the executive committee/CEO/MD? [Probe: How often does the CEO report to the BoD?] If the BoD does not agree with the CEO/MD on a matter, what typically happens? What can be done to enable the BoD to work better or more closely with the executives?
5. Can you please describe to us the process by which you were selected to _____ position in the collective? [Probe: if there was an election: what made you decide to stand for election for this position? How confident were you of winning?]
6. Before you were selected to this position, were you provided with any training? If yes, what trainings? Did you find them helpful? Have you been provided with any training since you took your current position? If yes, what was the type of training? Was this provided to everyone in the group or only to a few members? Did you find it helpful? Do you feel equipped to be able to function in your current role as _____? Do you feel the need for any further training to help you improve the functioning of the collective? If yes, what kind? Do you feel a need for refresher trainings?
7. Can you elaborate how information on the operations of the collective is shared with the BoD/collective leaders? [Probe: How often does the BoD/leaders meet? How is the agenda set?] What do you think can be done to improve the sharing of information and communication between collective members, the CEO, CFO and the BoD?
8. Apart from trainings, what kind of support will help the BoD to function well in the future?
9. Could you tell us what the roles and responsibilities of the CEO, CFO, manager and accountant are? [This is context-specific.]
10. If men are also part of the collective [Question 1], are they also part of the BoD/leadership? If yes, how many men and women are part of the BoD?

URMUL program

1. Which year was this collective started? How has the collective grown since the beginning? [Probe: How many members were there initially? How many are there now? Has membership increased?]
2. Did you receive any financial support or funding [This can also be in-kind, e.g., sewing machines, raw materials] to run the collective? If yes, what was the source of this support or funding?

3. How have the quality and quantity of products and raw materials improved the functioning of the collective? What was done to achieve this?
4. What about prices? How has this changed over time? How was this increase/decrease achieved? [Probe: Can you recall instances in which the collective was able to successful negotiate prices or sale contracts? Target more profitable markets? Diversify products?]
5. How has the collective changed production costs for women working in the crafts sector? What about transportation costs, how have those changed? [COSTS] How have the role of middlemen changed?
6. Being in a business is risky. How do you think joining a collective reduces this risk for women in crafts? [RISK SHARING]
7. Does the collective currently produce and sell products for profit and income purposes? When was the first time, since its inception, that the collective started selling products? Do you think the sales have improved over time? To whom do you sell – directly in the market or to URMUL? [Probe: how much did you sell in local markets and in urban/online markets? Who were your largest buyers? How do you market your products? [ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND MARKETS]
8. How does the collective access raw materials? Which markets do you buy raw materials from? Are there middlemen involved? Do you have to negotiate with them? Who in the collective does the negotiating/interacting? [Probe: Do different raw materials have different markets? What do they buy locally versus outside? **For members ask**: how does the collective help you to access raw materials?] [ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND MARKETS]
9. How has the technology changed in the last ten years? How did the collective adapt to this change? If members were to be trained in new production technologies, how confident do you feel to be able to use them? If no, why not? [TECHNOLOGY]
10. Has the collective organized any kind of training or course for its members in the past two years? What was the training about? What was the participation like? [PARTICIPATION AND RESPONSE]
11. Have you received any support from government schemes/subsidies? What were these schemes and how helpful have they been? Do you think that existing supports are adequate?
12. What are the main challenges that women working in crafts are facing today? What are the specific problems they face? What is your vision on the role that the collective can play to alleviate these constraints? What specific trainings do you think can be done to alleviate these challenges?
13. What are the main challenges the collective is currently facing? [Probe: how has COVID-19 affected the collective?] Apart from COVID, what are the other challenges the collective faces? What is the strategy to overcome these challenges?

Funds (CEO/MD/CFO only)

1. How would you assess the financial viability of the collective? What would be needed for the collective to be self-sustainable? What would be needed for the collective to scale up?
2. Is the collective entirely financially sustainable? Could you provide some details on the profits? Are the women able to make substantial income from this work?

3. IDI with husband of members

Name of the researcher:
Name of the respondent:
Name of the collective:
Year wife joined the collective:

State:
District:
Town:
Ward:
Date of interview:
Place of interview:
Discussion start time**:**

Background and context

1. How many members are there in your family? What is everyone's age, educational qualifications, and primary occupation?
2. What is your primary occupation/activity? Which activity do you earn the most income from? Do you ever have to travel to another town or village for work? If so, how many months at a stretch do you go for and for what work? Does anybody else in your household ever migrate?
3. Is craft work a part of your family/community tradition? Have the women in your household been involved in it before? How many generations have practiced it?
4. Are you involved in craft work? Are any other men in your family also involved in it? What specific activities are the men involved in and what are the women involved in, in the value chain?
5. How did the women in your family [e.g., wife/mother] become associated with URMUL? Are you also associated with URMUL?
6. Have you noticed any changes or impact [in your wife as well as the larger family] since then? Has it had any impact on the overall household income?
7. What other challenges do you face in your regular lives [e.g., a dearth of water/ violence within the community/ chronic health issues, lack of healthcare facilities]?

Roles and responsibilities within the household

1. What is your daily routine like? Please tell us what activities you do from morning to night. [Probe: are they members of the *gram panchayat* [village council]? Are they involved in village-level decision-making?]
2. In your home and in society, do women do specific activities [e.g., care work, cooking, agriculture], and men do others? Could you give us some examples? If yes, why is it so?
3. How are decisions made in your household? Are the women (your wife specifically) also involved? [Probe: give an example such as buying a TV/fridge, children's education-related expenses, deciding which crops to grow, decisions on other household-level expenses like buying vegetables]

Challenges

1. Is your wife a part of an SHG? When did she become a member? What were your views/initial reaction to her being a part of the SHG initially? Did you initially have apprehensions or were you against it? What changed? Were you supportive of your wife joining an SHG? Were other members of your family also supportive? If not, who had an issue? What was the issue? What has changed now? Since your wife works (with URMUL), what is the impact on housework? Who takes care of the children? How do you support her with her work?
2. When did your wife become associated with URMUL? Did you initially have an issue with your wife working in the craft collective? If yes, why? What were your apprehensions? Did you face any pushback from family members when your wife joined the craft collective? Did any neighbors or friends or relatives comment upon her joining the craft collective?
3. Do the women in your own family [e.g., wife/daughter/sister] have the freedom to work?

C. URMUL team members

1. KII with the URMUL team

Background and context

1. Please describe your role in URMUL? How long have you been part of this organization?
2. Could you please give us a brief background on the history of URMUL? What were the motivations behind setting it up? What was the overall vision? When did you enter the crafts space and what were the motivations behind this?
3. Could you tell us more about the crafts sector in Rajasthan? [Probe: list of crafts currently being practiced, current challenges and issues for each craft, growth over the years, prospects, gender division for each craft]
4. Could you tell us a little bit about the socio-cultural context in the regions you work in with crafts collectives? [Probe: main sources of livelihood, what do men and women do, caste groups, migration patterns]
5. Could you tell us if there were any other collectives/NGOs/other firms working in the areas where URMUL works? What was the primary occupation/source of livelihood for women before they became associated with URMUL?
6. What are the different kinds of societal challenges you face when approaching women? [With respect to caste dynamics, other community dynamics, refugees. **For researcher:** make sure you mention that this is with respect to caste dynamics and other community dynamics.] In addition to these, what are some of the community perceptions on gender roles (regarding women working/ domestic work) that you encounter? How do you overcome these challenges and community dynamics that are in place in rural settings?
7. What are the power dynamics that you need to negotiate? (caste/religion/gender) How do you overcome the same?

About the crafts collectives

1. Where is the UT office currently located? What are the main functions and activities performed in the UT office?
2. What was the motivation behind setting up the different sister organizations/producer companies (PCs)? Please explain the entire process of setting up the PCs. What is the role the UT plays in establishing these PCs? Apart from setting them up, what role does the UT play?
3. Who are the shareholders/owners of these companies currently? How did URMUL initially identify and pursue the various value-chain actors to provide raw materials/source final products from these cooperatives?
4. How does URMUL define a craft cluster? Are multiple village-level CIGs working on a particular craft connected to each other as one cluster? Do the villages have to be close to each other? For example, are multiple nearby villages where women do embroidery grouped together and called an embroidery cluster?
5. If yes, who is responsible for setting up these functional craft clusters – the UT or the PCs?
6. How is the decision to choose villages (that form a cluster) taken? What are the criteria for selecting the village and deciding which craft will be practiced and taught? [Probe: Did they pick a set of villages where weaving being undertaken, and how do they coordinate across villages in one cluster?]
7. Are the craft clusters (or CIGs, if there are no clusters) working on different crafts connected to each other? [For example, if an order is placed for 10 woolen kurtas with embroidery work, does the PC employ women to spin the yarn from a desi-wool cluster, then employ the weaving cluster and then the embroidery cluster?] Is URMUL taking steps to connect different clusters at different stages to work together? Is this being done under the Swashakt project?

8. [If answered question 5] how are they connected and what is the relationship? Which clusters are connected and how are they connected? Please explain the linkage to us. Which clusters under Swashakt are connected or expected to be linked in the future? What interactions have there been in the past year among clusters that are already connected? Were any outputs/products produced by any of these clusters used by other clusters under the project (e.g., a stitched kurta in one cluster being sent to an embroidery cluster for embroidery work)? If yes, how much of the total and percentage of output moved from one cluster to another?
9. [Assuming that they form clusters] Are the different craft clusters geographically close to each other? Who coordinates the clusters (e.g., woolen kurta)? What is the role played by the PCs and by the UT? [Probe: coordination/providing funding/capacity building] Explain the process.
10. Are women from the stitching clusters ever put in touch with women in the weaving clusters, even if just one or two members of each group meet? If yes, who coordinates this?
11. Have any non-craft related trainings taken place as part of Swashakt? If so, do women from different CIGs/clusters ever come together for these trainings?
12. How many and which clusters (or CIGs/villages) are usually a part of one PC/sister organization? How is this decision made? Who makes this decision?
13. [Assuming they form clusters] What are the benefits of operating in different clusters? [Probe: do women specialize in different parts of the value chain?]
14. Is there any scope or possibility of women from one CIG moving to another if they want to learn a different craft/skill? **OR** is there any scope for women from one CIG/craft cluster to travel to another craft cluster to participate in a training for a different craft they want to learn?
15. [Assuming they form clusters] Did the craft clusters exist before URMUL started their interventions, or did the villages function independently?
16. Presently, URMUL (the PCs) provides employment to these different craft clusters/CIGs or villages. How did they function before URMUL started their interventions? For example, explain how a stitching/embroidery/spinning/block printing cluster or village would function before URMUL started work. Explain the value chain before URMUL intervened, and how things are different after URMUL's work. What is different? How have the villages/clusters benefited?
17. How does URMUL define a CIG? What was the motivation behind forming CIGs at the village level? As per your definition, do the CIGs have to meet regularly as a group? Is meeting on a regular basis a fixed criterion or something that is mandatory?
18. Do all village-level CIGs have a workspace where they come together and work? If not, which crafts require women to work from the workspace (because equipment is only available at the work shed), and in which clusters do the women largely work from home?
19. What is the structure of the CIG group in the village? How many members does it usually have? How many are men/ women on average? Is there a limit as to how many women can be a part of a CIG?
20. How do you usually mobilize women who are independently working on crafts such as weaving/embroidery/desi wool to be a part of a CIG? How is the selection done? What is the process you follow? What are the different kinds of challenges you face?
21. At the CIG level, are there any leaders apart from the *vyavasthapak*? How is the *vyavasthapak* selected? What are their roles and responsibilities? [Probe: apart from interaction with middlemen and URMUL, does the *vyavasthapak* play any other role, such as monitoring the work of other women in the CIG?] What are the different roles and responsibilities played by women in the CIG? Are the *vyavasthapaks* usually men or women within the CIG?
22. Do the CIGs have their own bank account, or do the members have individual bank accounts? At what stage does this happen? Do the women operate the accounts on their own? Is there training provided for this?

23. For each craft, please explain the value chain to us and how the work done by women in the villages (at the CIG level) is linked to companies (i.e., the relationship between companies and women at the CIG level). Who are the buyers usually? How and where do they place orders? Who takes the orders? Who are the designers? At which stage do women at the village level come in? Where is the crafts work done and who does this? Who negotiates with external buyers? Who sets the rate and how? Explain the different roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in the value chain, along with the location of each activity. What are some of the challenges you face at different points in the value chain? [Probe: facilitating access to raw materials, etc.] [Note: ask about different crafts.]
24. Currently, women at the CIG level are not part of the companies; they only work/provide labor for these companies. Does URMUL have any plans to make them shareholders of the society, so they also get a share of the profits? How are employees selected or recruited to the companies? Does URMUL plan to train and employ women at the society? Why or why not?
25. Prior to URMUL's initiatives, were women in these villages already engaged in the crafts that URMUL supports? If so, what were the avenues they were using for sales?
26. Presently, is URMUL usually the only buyer or do the women also sell in the wholesale market or to other buyers/organizations/individuals? If URMUL is the only buyer, why?
27. Are the women taught to buy thread and other input materials from the market, negotiate with buyers, perform weaving/stitching/crafts work, and sell in the market?
28. Prior to URMUL's interventions, if the women were earning money through craft work, what were their wages? What was the market rate? What is their current wage rate from URMUL? What is the current market rate? Does the wage rate or market rate differ for different crafts? On average, what do you think is the current income that women get from craft-related work? Is this usually their main source of income? Do they engage in other income-generating activities? [Can answer this district-wise or craft-wise.]
29. Can a woman increase her hours of work (more quantity) if she there is a financial need? Is this entirely dependent on the demand from URMUL's PC?
30. How important is the income from crafts for these households? What are the other sources of livelihood for men and women? [District-wise or craft cluster-wise] Has the importance of income from crafts changed over the years? Have sources of livelihood diversified over the years? [Note: Understand trends.]
31. Is the village-level work only envisaged for economic empowerment and income generation for women? Are the CIGs also meant to help in creating a social support network for these women? If yes, then how? If not, then why not?
32. What changes have you observed among these women, their households, and community members due to their work? [Probe: confidence, decision-making, etc.]
33. What steps do you take to prevent gender biases and issues in clusters where men and women work? Are their roles within the craft restricted to traditional gender roles? [Probe: men doing marketing, men doing weaving, etc.] Does URMUL do anything to change this? Is URMUL planning to do something to change this?
34. Could you talk about the gender division of work within households in the craft clusters you work in? Does this vary across crafts or districts? For example, are the gender dynamics and roles and responsibilities in weaving villages different from those of stitching villages? Or are they different across districts? If there is variation, has it been easier to work in some craft clusters or districts compared to others?
35. Do the women associated with URMUL engage in other activities as a group? If yes, what kind of social and cultural activities do these groups engage in (e.g., behavior change communication regarding health issues, gender issues such as violence)? If they do, is there some backlash received from the community, especially from men?
36. Are these crafts being taken up by young women or men from the next generation? If yes, what are the reasons? If not, what are the factors leading to the craft dying out? What are

the other employment opportunities available to them? Is URMUL taking initiatives to revive the art among this generation? If so, in what way?

Trainings

1. As part of Swashakt, what trainings are to be provided to women at the CIG or PC level? Please list the trainings you plan to conduct as part of the Swashakt program (e.g., craft-specific/marketing/business development) and what you perceive to be the value of each (the expected outcome of each training, e.g., improved technical skills, improved gender dynamics in household/collective, improved management skills). How long do you think these outcomes will take to manifest? [Probe: 1 year? 3 years?]
2. In the same list, can you provide details on the month and year the training is expected to take place, the different modules they intend to cover in each of these trainings, how many participants will be in each training, the number of days for each training, the plan for refresher trainings, the expected location for each training (village level/cluster level), and transport provisions?
3. At the CIG level, apart from craft trainings, are there any other kinds of activities or trainings done (this could be a part of the craft trainings as well)? [For example, awareness about government schemes, awareness on social issues?]
4. Do these trainings cover the benefits of working together as a group or collective?
5. In your trainings, do you talk about the different craft clusters and sister organizations under URMUL, how they are connected, and how to work with these different clusters?
6. Prior to the Swashakt program, what trainings did URMUL provide to the women over the years?
7. Does the *vyavasthapak* undertake any additional trainings? Does URMUL also provide training to employees at the society level?
8. How do you design the training programs? Is a needs assessment undertaken before deciding which trainings to do?
9. What is the process for developing training materials? [DESIGN] Who develops the training modules? Is the field team or any external trainer involved in developing or adapting the training modules? Do you test the prototype modules before launching training in the field at scale?
10. Do you have any plans to monitor, assess, or evaluate the trainings? [Probe: through test scores at the beginning and end, or other methods]. If so, are the data being recorded and monitored, and do you enable tracking of the progress of individual women?
11. How do you plan to monitor participation in trainings and in the interventions? Are monitoring systems in place? [PARTICIPATION AND RESPONSE]
12. What are the selection criteria for the trainers? What is the selection process? Do you envisage the women being trained to become master trainers themselves who would provide trainings to other CIG members?
13. What kind of issues and challenges are you facing when conducting the skills development trainings? [Probe: with respect to getting women to participate in training programs, attrition, infrastructure, other challenges?]
14. What are some of the other challenges the women face? Are their family members open to them attending, especially if the training center is away from the village? What is the mode of transport they use? Is this a challenge (in terms of attrition due to mobility issues and safety concerns)?
15. How are these trainings expected to help and benefit the women? Will it help the women increase production capacity or start production?
16. Do you provide any trainings or awareness sessions on gender sensitization to the women and their family members? If yes, who conducts these awareness sessions, and what are they comprised of? Is this being carried out as part of the Swashakt program as well?

17. Do women also have other opportunities to receive similar trainings? Are the women a part of the SHGs set up by Rajeevika? Have they undergone any trainings as part of that? If yes, which ones? Does URMUL account for trainings that have already been provided by other organizations before organizing their trainings?
18. In the villages, where there are men and women involved in a craft, do you conduct trainings with both together [for example, men and women in a weaving cluster]? What are the power dynamics in such a case, and what challenges do you face?
19. How are learning spaces for training sessions chosen? How do the spaces impact implementation?
20. Apart from URMUL, are there any other organizations/NGOs providing trainings to these women? If yes, who are they and what kind of trainings are they [if they are aware]?

Scalability

1. What is your understanding of scaling up and what does it entail? [Probe: does it involve integrating more women/villages into the PC fold to increase profits?]
2. Could you tell us about URMUL's process/model for scaling up? What are some of the key things you keep in mind to ensure scale? According to you, what are the determinants or pre-requisites for successful scale-up?
3. Who works on scaling up? Does the UT strategize and work with the PCs to increase scale? Explain the process and who is involved.
4. What are the different challenges you face while trying to increase scale? [Probe: Difficulties in markets, e.g., market size is insufficient to increase scale, lack of capacity within URMUL /PCs, lack of credit, women have other sources of income that are more profitable so there is less demand for work, etc.]. Do these challenges impact the strategy of scaling up, or how you define scale? If yes, can you illustrate with an example (if any of the reasons stated above impacted the scale of URMUL's program implementation)?
5. How are profits from the collective used to scale or advance the production capacity of the enterprise? Explain the process.
6. How are the collectives at the consolidation scale different from those at the incubation stage, and how are collectives at the scale stage different from those at the consolidation stage? What is the difference in skill sets? What are the different trainings provided at each stage? How do you plan to scale up the collectives at the incubation stage? Are inputs taken from technical experts?
7. How has COVID-19 impacted the plan to scale up the work of these companies? Have any of your plans to scale up changed? If so, in what way? What strategies (if any) have been devised to mitigate this challenge?

Sustainability

1. How would you define a sustainable collective? Please talk about your understanding of sustainability at the CIG level and the society level.
2. What are the steps URMUL takes to ensure sustainability of the collectives at the CIG level and PC level? In what way do you think the collectives need to be sustainable? [Probe: financial/environmental, etc.]
3. How do you ensure that the companies are sustainable in the long run, and continue to make profits and employ women in the villages? Can you explain this in detail by providing an example of a society that has been successful in doing so?
4. What kind of handholding support does the UT provide to these companies (e.g., financial support or trainings, branding, negotiations with retailers like Okhai/Fabindia)? Is this support going to be an ongoing component of the program or do you plan to stop being involved at some point in the future? Do you have plans to eventually be able to cover these costs using profits generated by the society? What about other input costs that currently being borne by the UT?

5. What is your plan to make the companies sustainable in areas in which the UT team is currently providing active support? How long do you think it will take, and what are the factors that could adversely (or positively) affect this? [Probe: is there any difference here based on the craft and its specific value chain?]
6. What are some of the challenges or issues you are expecting while trying to ensure sustainability?
7. The outbreak of COVID-19 led to substantial changes in the market, as well as in demand. How did the companies realign their strategies to remain sustainable/afloat during this crisis? What kind of support was provided by the UT at CIG level and society level?
8. Could you tell us about any challenges or lessons learnt during the implementation process as part of the Swashakt project?
9. Could you tell us a little bit about the crafts industry in Rajasthan? Are these dying occupations? Why or why not? When did the decline begin and what were the primary reasons? Does it make sense to try and revive them?

Overall functioning of the organization

1. What are your various sources of funding? [Probe: Changes in sources of funding over the years.] What are the challenges you face, or used to face, in acquiring funding?
2. Is staff attrition a problem? Why do you think this is a problem and how do you deal with it?
3. How do you monitor the work being done? Do you have a monitoring and evaluation system in place? Do you collect monitoring data through an app? Or manually? [Probe: Ask in detail about the indicators and process in place for monitoring and ensuring quality checks in data. For the researcher: Ask if they would be willing to share the monitoring sheet or framework they use, or if they have any document which could help to better understand the system.]

2. IDI with a trainer

Name:
Gender:
Age:
Place of residence:

Educational qualifications/any other qualifications/certifications

1. How did you get on board as a trainer/staff/leader for URMUL?
2. What is your educational background?
3. Have you been involved in the crafts sector before? If so, in what way and capacity?
4. Do you have any prior experience providing trainings to women? If so, how many years?
5. What were your motivations behind doing this work and providing trainings to these women?
6. Have you done trainings for women at the incubation/scale stage as well?

General questions

1. What are the different kinds of trainings that you conduct? [Probe: craft-specific, marketing, business management, gender, etc.]
2. How did the collectives feel about the need for each training? Do you feel that women are interested in learning, capacity development, and taking part in these trainings?
3. How do you mobilize women for these trainings? What are the challenges involved in the same?

4. Do people drop out of these trainings? If yes, what do you think can be done to reduce the number of people dropping out? What do you think are the main reasons for people dropping out?
5. Where in a village are the trainings generally conducted? Do the women feel safe coming to the training center? How long are these trainings? [Probe: How many hours in a day, timings, how many days in a week, modes of commute, etc.] How do you ensure that women are able to attend these trainings [e.g., ensuring safe commute/ flexible timings/buy-in from family, etc.]?
6. Do you provide exposure or cross-learning visits/ practical training, especially in sales and marketing during trainings?
7. Do women use these trainings to also discuss some of the problems or challenges that they might be facing while dealing with stakeholders in the value chain (e.g., middlemen, buyers, suppliers of raw materials)?
8. Do you think that women who participate in these trainings have a smartphone with stable internet connection or are they able to access a smartphone at home? In your opinion, do women in these villages know how to use smartphones?
9. Do you also train women from collectives to take up the role of trainer (training of trainers model)?
10. Are there women within these groups who can act as mentors to provide guidance, support, and mentorship to new women joining existing groups or new groups being established?
11. Are there intra-group dynamics (based on caste/ professional affiliation) that you see during the training sessions? How do you resolve such power dynamics if they arise?

Craft-specific trainings

12. What are the major topics that you cover as part of the capacity-building training session? (This will depend on the craft/stage of the collective.)
13. Can you provide a breakdown of the different modules covered in the training? How many days/hours are given to each module? (Note: Researcher should try and get documents on this.)
14. How many sessions are held, and at what frequency?
15. How many women are part of each training group?
16. How are women selected for training? Or is the training provided to only those women who express an interest in it?
17. How does the content of these modules differ based on the collective's stage? [Probe: women who have just joined the collective, who have been members of the collective for 3–4 years, who are part of the established collective.]
18. Do you also conduct any refresher trainings? If yes, how often are these held? Are these trainings attended by all the women or only a few? Do you also provide women with support and guidance over the phone or via video calls?
19. Do men also attend these trainings? If yes, what are the challenges involved with the same? What are the power dynamics in the training sessions like? [Probe: do the women feel comfortable with men being part of the training? Are the women able to participate/speak up/ ask questions or voice their opinions? How do the men feel about attending these trainings with women? Do the men dominate the discussions?]
20. What are some of the challenges you face while implementing these trainings?
21. Do you also have experts from various sectors providing these trainings?
22. How do you assess whether women are able to follow the training? Do you also conduct any post-training evaluations to be able to study the impact of the training? If yes, what are the ways in which you do this? What happens when you see that there are women who are unable to understand or follow what is being taught?

Finance and marketing

23. What are the major topics that you cover in the trainings with regard to financial inclusion?
24. What is the batch strength for these trainings?
25. How are women selected for the trainings? Are all women part of the trainings or is it only provided to those who express an interest in the subject?
26. Do men also participate in these trainings? If yes, what are the challenges involved in the same? What are the power dynamics like? [Probe: do the women feel comfortable with men being part of the training? Are the women able to participate/speak up/ ask questions or voice their opinions? How do the men feel about attending these trainings with women? Do the men dominate the discussions?]
27. If a craftsperson is unable to attend these trainings due to family matters or other pressing issues, do you have alternate mechanism to ensure that they remain up to date with the content? If yes, what is it? Do you have processes in place such as peer learning?
28. Do you also conduct any refresher trainings? If yes, how often are these held? Are these trainings attended by all the women or only a few? Do you also provide them with support and guidance over the phone or via video calls?
29. What are some of the challenges you face while implementing these trainings?
30. Do you also have experts from various sectors providing these trainings?
31. How do you ensure that the women remain up-to-date with latest financial schemes, marketing trends, etc.?
32. How do you assess whether women are able to follow the training Do you also conduct any post-training evaluations to be able to study the impact of the training? If yes, what are the ways in which you do this? What happens when you see that there are women who are unable to understand or follow what is being taught?
33. Are women crafts persons taken to the banks and practically shown how to open the bank accounts, the process for undertaking loans, etc.?
34. Are women artisans/crafts persons able to raise money through funding and pitching their work and projects?
35. Are they able to independently invest money that yields better interest rates?

Business management

36. How do you identify candidates for higher-level trainings (e.g., investment, business development and strategy) in the scale and consolidation stage? Apart from acumen, do you also include candidates who have a keen interest in learning these aspects of business?
37. How will you (or do you) build training capacity on the topic of “greening the supply chain”? Please explain in detail.
38. Do you have external designers who come and conduct training sessions for these weavers? Do retailers (e.g., Fabindia) also send designers to ensure that you are updated with recent designs and market demands?
39. Repeat questions 24–30

Technology

40. Do you conduct technology-related trainings as well? If yes, what kind of technology-related trainings are being implemented? Do you have separate trainings to teach members how to use a smartphone, tablet, or computer?
41. Repeat questions 24–30

COVID-19

42. During COVID-19, did you continue providing these trainings? Was this done remotely? What were the challenges involved?

Appendix B: Fieldwork protocol

Guidelines for Swashakt fieldwork

Appendix C: Coding framework

Data sources

- FGDs with women members of the collectives (in agriculture, ACCESS)
- FGDs with women members of the collectives (in weaving, Chitrika)
- FGDs with women members of the collectives (in crafts work, URMUL)
- IDIs with women members of the collectives (in agriculture, ACCESS)
- IDIs with women members of the collectives (in weaving, Chitrika)
- IDIs with women members of the collectives (in crafts work, URMUL)
- IDIs with women non-members (in weaving, Chitrika)
- FGDs with women non-members
- IDIs with spouses of collective members
- FGDs with male members of the collective
- FGDs with BoD (Chitrika)
- IDIs with leaders of the collective
- IDIs with master weavers
- KIIs with community gatekeepers (sarpanch/*panchayat* member)
- KIIs with Chitrika/ URMUL/ACCESS leadership
- KIIs with community mobilizers, production coordinators, other field-level staff
- KIIs with master trainers
- Academic articles (including evaluation studies, research articles)
- Project documents
- Observations

Context

1. Societal and village context

- Social norms
- Gender norms
- Groups in the village and other interventions
- Caste and religion
    - Conflict in the village
    - Restrictions based on caste

2. Individual or personal context

- Socio-cultural context
    - Education levels
        - Women's education
        - Men's education
    - Mobility
        - Within village
        - Outside village
    - Confidence
        - Making decisions
        - Traveling
        - Voicing opinions in public platforms
        - Negotiation with external stakeholders or buyers/sellers
        - Self-efficacy/own capabilities to do work
    - Involvement in decision-making
        - Household level
        - Community level
        - Collective/group level

- Social capital
- Participation in village development work/politics

- Economic context
  - Current primary and secondary sources of livelihood
    - Agricultural sources of livelihood
    - Women's sources of livelihood
    - Men's sources of livelihood
  - Women working with master weavers
    - Context and history of association
    - Roles and responsibilities
    - Advantages
    - Disadvantages
    - Wages and payments
    - Awareness levels regarding value-chain activities
    - Value chain
    - Product details
  - Gender roles and responsibilities in income-generating activities
  - Migration context
  - Access to resources (markets, schemes, credit)
    - Household level (e.g., buying groceries and household supplies)
    - Collective level (e.g., buying/selling work as part of the PC/FPC/collective)
  - Land ownership
  - Income and wages
    - Women's income
    - Men's income

3. Family context

- In-laws' background
- Native family background
- Number of children
- Support from family members in household work
- Power dynamics at household and community level

4. Impact of COVID-19

- Economic impacts
  - Individual level/household level
  - Business/collective level
- Mental health impacts
- Impact on education
- Impact on physical health

5. Program context

- Genesis and historical background
- Program design
  - Service delivery/implementation
    - Roles and responsibilities of employees
  - Business development
    - Market linkage plans
    - Branding
  - Infrastructure
  - Scalability
  - Sustainability

Collective structure and functioning

1. **Characteristics of the collective**
    - Governance structure and hierarchy/positions and designations
    - Descriptions of the collective enterprise model
    - Selection criteria for members/employees/BoD
    - Functioning
    - Value chain
        - Women's activities
        - Men's activities
    - Product details
    - Roles and responsibilities
    - Weaving
    - Farming
    - Agriculture processing activities
    - Crafts
    - Marketing and sales
    - Accounts
    - Overlooking daily operations and conflict resolution
    - Business development, including procurement of raw materials and interacting with different stakeholders
    - Providing trainings
    - Mobilization
    - Gender and caste composition
    - Meetings
    - Type of meeting
        - Regular scheduled meeting
        - Unscheduled meeting
    - Frequency of meeting
        - Weekly
        - Monthly
        - Quarterly
        - Yearly
    - Costs, sales, and profits
    - Share money paid
    - Input costs
    - Sales
    - Profits
    - Distribution of profit among shareholders
2. **SHG structure and functions**
    - Frequency of meetings
    - Functions
    - Membership
    - Trainings
3. **Weaver societies and other collectives in the village**
    - Frequency of meetings
    - Functions
    - Membership
    - Trainings
    - Value chain
    - Product details

Implementation

1. **Implementation progress**
    - Industry/sector (farming/weaving/crafts)
    - Mobilization process and awareness generation
    - Recruitment
    - Trainings
        - No trainings conducted
        - Type of training conducted
            - Enterprise development
            - Business management
            - Industry-specific trainings (weaving/agricultural processing/other crafts)
            - Technology/equipment use trainings
            - Finance
            - Marketing
            - Gender sensitization
            - Life skills
            - Refresher training
            - Grievance redressal
        - Location
        - Mode of training
            - Online
            - Offline/in person
        - Refresher training
            - If yes, frequency of refresher trainings
        - Level of understanding and recollection (of the women)
        - Perception of usefulness (women's perception)
        - Challenges in implementation of trainings
    - Monitoring
        - Monitoring of trainings
            - Attendance records
            - Participation
            - Feedback mechanism
        - Different indicators for monitoring program implementation
        - Frequency of monitoring
        - Mode of monitoring
            - Manual
            - App-based monitoring
        - Challenges with monitoring
    - Production
        - Volume of sales and profits margins
        - Costs (input, transportation)
        - Design process and branding
        - Quality assurance
        - Market linkages and other information on buyers
        - Production-related challenges
        - Awareness levels among members
2. Barriers to uptake
    - Harmful social norms (what others perceive or expect to be acceptable)
    - Family restrictions
    - Payment or wage rate-related issues
    - Lack of awareness

- Primary caregiver responsibilities
- Caste barriers
- Lack of mobility
- Lack of confidence
- Presence or association with master weavers

3. Facilitators
    - Acceptance by community and family
    - Support in domestic chores
    - Social network and support through the collective
    - Trainings are made available to enhance skills
    - Infrastructure setup
    - Materials provided
    - Awareness sessions
    - Health/insurance cover/provider well-being
4. Fidelity
    - Operational/implementation issues
        - Attrition/high dropout rates
        - Travel to Common Facility Centre/ production centers
            - Safety concerns
            - Insufficient transport
            - Distance too high
            - Family restrictions
            - Distance to production center/work shed
    - Strategies to tackle challenges and implementation issues
    - Power dynamics and decision-making within the collectives
    - Administrative challenges
    - Mobilization challenges
    - Budget constraints
    - Sustainability/scalability-related issues

Appendix D: Value-chain activities for different craft clusters

This section describes the value chain for embroidery, applique, dyeing, and spinning. For weaving, stitching, and block printing, no value chain currently exists. These craft clusters are in different stages. The value chains of different crafts shed further light on the interactions between societies, clusters, and CIGs.

Embroidery value chain in URMUL Seemant Samiti, Bajju

- First the order is placed (either by an external buyer, or, for internal stores/online orders, the society's design team creates the design and provides orders to the clusters).
- Designing and stitching of cloth is undertaken at the society office, as stitching clusters are not yet functional.
- C*hhapai* (stamping designs) onto the cloth is carried out at the office, followed by testing of the sample design.
- This stitched and stamped material, along with the sample design and thread, is sent to the embroidery clusters (multiple CIGs) for embroidery.
- The finished product is returned to the society. Quality assurance is carried out at the society office by the quality assurance team.

Applique in UMBVS, Pokhran – Marugandha

There are not yet any third-party/external buyers for applique products. Therefore, products are made internally and sold at the URMUL shop, in exhibitions, or online.

- Design, and procurement of raw material, are performed at the society.
- Sampling is also done at the society along with the artisans.
- The material is then sent to the CIG for quality assurance. There are five women assigned for this purpose (they are selected during the UT's initial trainings when establishing the clusters, and trained in quality assurance work).
- The product is returned to the society.
- Quality assurance is also performed at the society level. The goal is to have 2-3 rounds of quality assurance: at the CIG, society, and Marugandha Crafts and Agri Food brand level (once that is established). However, this is currently only occurring at the society level and, in some places, the CIG level where training has taken place.
- The product is then sold in stores and exhibitions.

Dyeing

There are three varieties of dyeing: chemical, natural, and tie dye. The value chain for these 3 types is outlined below.

1. Chemical dyeing: Two clusters—UMBVS Pokhran and URMUL Setu, Lunkaransar—perform chemical dyeing; they are in the consolidation stage.
    - For these clusters, the dyeing units are located at the society itself.
    - IKEA places an order with Rangsutra and provides them with the yarn and other raw materials.
    - Rangsutra then places an order to the URMUL Setu society and provides them with the yarn, etc.
    - The society develops the color, dyes the yarn, and weaves the yarn in-house.

- The products are sent to Rangsutra, who then sends it to IKEA, and the payments are made.

2. Natural dyeing (incubation stage): Rajasar cluster under URMUL Setu, Lunkaransar. The value chain is currently being set up.
3. Tie-dye (incubation stage): Sujangarh village in Churu district, URMUL Marushakti. The value chain is not yet set up.

Spinning

The spinning cluster is at the incubation stage and not currently under any society. The UT is thinking of various ways to link the spinning cluster to the market and other crafts. For one such linkage, the UT also has a value chain in mind; the details are described below.

1. Linkage 1: The UT is establishing a linkage with the carpet weaving industry, which includes nearby carpet weavers who require spun yarn. Women are being taught to make yarns of different thickness. Coarser yarn will be produced for sale to the carpet industry, and thinner yarn will be produced for sale to the societies.
2. Linkage 2: All weaving clusters under the various societies require spun yarn. Previously, these societies would procure spun yarn from a seller (from Gujarat), but the UT is trying to set up a linkage so they can procure yarn from the spinning clusters. However, this linkage will not be direct, but rather via the society, which will be the facilitating body.

   The value chain that the UT envisions for this linkage is as follows:
   - Whichever society has a collection of desi wool products, or wants to work with desi wool products, will place an order with the spinning CIGs (this will most likely be URMUL Setu in Lunkaransar or Marugandha in Pokhran).
   - This spun yarn will be then sent back to the society, who will send it on to the dyeing cluster (Lunkaransar and Pokhran have dyeing clusters), and then to the weaving cluster (URMUL Setu, Lunkaransar and Marugandha, Pokhran). This value chain is part of the 3ie-funded clusters.
3. Linkage 3: Another alternative linkage is sending spun yarn first to the dyeing cluster, and then to crochet cluster, which is not under 3ie funding. Societies are also planning their designs and collections based on this availability of spun yarn, designing different kinds of products that use desi wool, which will eventually provide these clusters with more business.

Stitching

There are two stitching clusters—Jodhpur and Alwar—though they are not yet functional as they do not have a center or workspace.

1. Jodhpur stitching cluster: This cluster is in the consolidation stage. It is not linked to any society and is currently under the UT. They have received some training in the past but it is not yet functional.
2. Alwar stitching cluster: This cluster is a part of Sauhard society. Although the society receives orders, they are not able to execute them since women are not willing to come to a center and undertake stitching work. They can carry out stitching work at home; however, the UT wants 10 women to come to the center and work together under supervised conditions while using machines to ensure good and consistent quality. The women, however, are willing to come to the center for block printing work as it pays more; the income from stitching is very low.

Weaving

This is a new weaving cluster in the incubation stage, located in Tankla village in Nagaur district. It is part of the URMUL Khejri Society, which has never before worked on crafts; therefore, the UT is currently providing more handholding support as the secretary knows very little about the weaving value chain. The Trust is providing inputs on design, product innovation, and linkages with the market.

Tankla has already received an order through URMUL. URMUL Setu received an invitation to participate in an intervention; however, Setu weaving-cluster artisans were occupied with IKEA orders. The UT therefore gave the order to the Tankla weaving cluster, and helped artisans in the village with design, collection, and product-innovation tasks. URMUL Setu received payment as they received the invite, and then paid artisans in Urmul Khejri from Tankla village. Prior to URMUL, weavers would only sell their products to exporters/external buyers who would come and place direct orders.

Consolidation

There are five consolidation weaving clusters: URMUL Setu, Lunkaransar (in-house weaving); Napasar cluster in Bikaner (not under a society); UMBVS, Phalodi (in house); UMBVS Pokhran (in house); and Marugandha, Pokhran (Thath and Gomath villages). This is the only village where weaving is done by women.

This was possible due to URMUL's intervention. For example, in-house weaving is performed in URMUL Setu in Lunkaransar. IKEA places an order with Rangsutra and provides them with all order details, requirements, and raw materials. Rangsutra then asks the URMUL Setu PC to implement the order, which occurs at the URMUL Setu, Lunkaransar center. Rangsutra monitors the quality. IKEA pays Rangsutra, who then pays URMUL Setu.

Block printing in Alwar

Training has just taken place, so the value chain is not yet established. Women are willing to come to the center.

Appendix E: Relationship between Rangsutra and the UT

In 1994, URMUL's first society, URMUL Seemant Samiti, was formed. Until 2004, they formed other societies with the objective of making them self-sufficient through mobilization, production support, and skills development. However, the UT realized that their strength lies in production, and focusing on design and marketing negatively affected production. In addition, the UT found duplications in orders among various societies, and a resulting inability to achieve scale due to disintegrated efforts.

Rangsutra was conceptualized as a limited company, in which artisans hold share capital. It was established to provide design and marketing support to different societies under the UT, helping them achieve the scale required. The founder of Rangsutra is also a member of the UT. All UT societies are suppliers of Rangsutra, although the company acquires supplies from artisans across the country, not just those associated with URMUL. Similarly, societies can take individual orders on their own, and are not bound to take orders only through Rangsutra.

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