

STRENGTHENING HANDLOOM CULTURE IN SAHASPUR: A PILOT

In a nutshell: To enable handloom weavers and local artisans for market-oriented skills, quality standardization, value addition, branding, and better marketing linkages for enterprise sustainability.

Nodal agency: Department of Rural Development, Government of Uttarakhand and UNDP India.

Few decades back when Uttarakhand was part of Uttar Pradesh, 60 families of Sahaspur block of Dehradun district were traditionally involved in handloom as their main source of livelihood. With the passage of time, handloom products were replaced by machine made products, since the former takes more time, and the latter was more attractive, less expensive and better in variety. Slowly, people started leaving this business and started alternate livelihoods.

A six-month project was implemented by UNDP in collaboration with Uttarakhand State Rural Livelihood Mission (USRLM) in 2021-22. The project was mainly focused on the revival of a dying art – the handloom culture using natural fibres, productive employment generation for SHG members, local brand promotion, establishment of backward and forward marketing linkages and creation of a sustainable model amongst the community.

Following the interventions, 37 artisans from 8 families were trained and capacitated in 90 days. During this small timeslot, 7 product lines and 45 prototypes were developed and made ready for the market.

UNDP assessed the need of the artisans and key gap areas for needful interventions and developed a scoping study. Based on that study, following potential interventions were carried out:

- Training and capacity building of handloom artisans on design thinking, product upgradation, hand embroidery, and market linkage.
- Market research and development of market-oriented products.
- Product costing and determination of maximum retail price.
- Brand building, sustainable packaging, and market linkage.
- Social media marketing.

Impact

Product development:

The intervention helped the artisans to improve sale of their products. They were encouraged to use different colours to make their product more attractive, incorporate new prints and embroidery to increase the value of the final product and explore new materials for a wider reach.

Product collections were made under the umbrella of 3 themes:

Theme 1: The surrounding mountains and skyline (created with wool) - Three product collections were created under this theme and material - stoles, mufflers, and shawls.

Theme 2: Forests (created with wool and silk) - Two product collections were created under this theme and material - stoles and saris.

Theme 3: Land and people (created with cotton and silk) - Two product collections were created under this theme and material - kurta and cushion covers.

Branding and packaging:

In discussion with the artisans, to build an identity and brand image for their products, through the process of mind mapping/design process, the name SAHAS KHARGHA was decided as the brand name.

Challenges

- It was very difficult to train identified artisans on various technical aspects of handloom enterprise in a very short timeslot of 90 days. Hence, UNDP organized a training of trainers (ToT) to get this done.
- Women participants were also involved in their domestic chores, and hence, the trainers had to reschedule the training hours as per participants' convenience.

Scale up

There are plans to scale up the production. While a generic training of identified key entrepreneurs had been conducted, further specific training and capacity building is required for different target groups as per area of interest of the entrepreneurs, e.g.:

- **Research and development:** new design thinking, upgradation, quality assurance (lead entrepreneurs),
- **Weavers group:** weaving practices and skills upgradation (SHGs/ women artisans),
- Value addition: embroidery, surface ornamental skills (SHGs/ women artisans),
- **Business development:** demand creation, customer relations (lead entrepreneurs),
- **E-marketing:** online marketing, order handling, product delivery mechanism (lead entrepreneurs),
- **Use of social media:** brand promotion (lead entrepreneurs),
- **Financial management:** accounting and financial records keeping, availing financial services, investment planning (lead entrepreneurs),
- **Training and capacity building of tribal communities** (ST HHs residing in surrounding villages) can be carried out,
- Development of an **e-Commerce website** for the enterprise to promote digital marketing,
- Establishment of **delivery mechanism for online orders** through e-commerce website, and
- Training of **entrepreneurs on maintenance of handloom units** and machinery.



Logo of Sahas Kargha