



# FROM THREADS TO THRIVING: INCOME GENERATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN VIA EMBROIDERY

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## ABSTRACT

Embroidery, an ancient craft of fabric decoration, holds cultural and economic significance. This project aimed to promote skill development and income generation through embroidery training among rural women and adolescent girls in Angadh and Karodiya villages. The initiative sought to empower participants by enhancing their embroidery skills, fostering financial independence, and reviving Indian regional embroidery as a cultural heritage. The project followed a systematic three-phase approach – planning, implementation, and evaluation – covering 35 participants (17 in Angadh and 18 in Karodiya). Training sessions included hands-on learning of embroidery stitches, design tracing, and final product creation, alongside e-marketing and business training. Participants were taught the 4Ps of marketing and how to establish social media business accounts to expand their reach. The project successfully enhanced participants' creativity and economic prospects. A high majority (97%) of the beneficiaries benefited economically, while ninety-four percent planned to leverage social media for business promotion. The initiative fostered self-employment, adaptability, and entrepreneurship, ensuring continued embroidery practice post-training. By integrating traditional skills with modern marketing, this project contributed to women's empowerment and sustainable livelihood development.

**KEY WORDS:** Rural Women, Adolescent Girls, Income Generation, Skill Development

## INTRODUCTION

### Status of Rural Women and Adolescent Girls in India

The status of women in rural areas remains a critical issue that requires multidimensional interventions. Despite gradual progress in education, healthcare, and economic participation, rural women continue to face significant challenges, including gender-based discrimination, limited access to resources, and socio-cultural constraints. Rural women are crucial to India's agriculture sector, contributing significantly to farming and related activities. Despite this, their economic opportunities are limited due to factors like lack of access to credit, markets, and modern agricultural techniques. They often work in informal sectors with minimal job security and low wages. Educational attainment among rural women has improved, but disparities remain compared to urban areas. Factors such as cultural norms, early marriage, and the need to contribute to household chores can affect school attendance and completion rates (Kapur 2019).

Rural women in Gujarat play a crucial role in agriculture, household management, and various informal economic activities, yet they continue to face significant socioeconomic challenges. Limited access to education, healthcare, and financial resources restricts their empowerment and opportunities for growth. Women and girls normally experience one or more of these factors within their households. These are regarded as barriers within the course of bringing about improvements in their status. Hence, it is vital to eliminate these barriers and promote advancement opportunities for women and girls. While government schemes and self-help groups (SHGs) have made efforts to improve their livelihood and skill development, traditional gender norms and societal constraints still hinder their progress. Despite these challenges, rural women are increasingly participating in income-generating activities, showcasing resilience and a growing awareness of their rights and opportunities for self-reliance. (Barot 2019).

### Importance of Skill Development and Income Generation for Rural Women

Skill development and income generation for rural women are essential for fostering economic empowerment and self-reliance. By acquiring new skills, women gain the ability to start their own businesses or secure better-paying jobs, thereby lifting their families out of poverty and boosting local economies. Financial independence also enhances their decision-making power, reducing dependence on male family members and challenging traditional gender roles. This newfound economic stability can elevate their social status and respect within the community, promoting more equitable gender relations. Moreover, women with stable incomes are more likely to invest in their children's education, breaking the cycle of poverty and benefiting the community in the long run. Increased



income also enables women to access better healthcare and improve living conditions, leading to enhanced overall health and well-being. Empowered women often become advocates for positive change, driving community development and contributing to resilience against economic shocks. Thus, investing in the skill 8 development and income generation of rural women not only promotes economic growth but also fosters social equity and community resilience. (Patel 2011).

Skill development in embroidery for women and adolescent girls can play a crucial role in enhancing their economic prospects and personal growth. Structured training programs and workshops can introduce them to various embroidery techniques, such as cross-stitch, satin stitch, back stitch and other stitches and equipping them with the skills needed to create high-quality, marketable products. By focusing on both traditional and contemporary methods, it can help participants develop a versatile skill set, allowing them to cater to diverse customer preferences and increase their marketability. Additionally, incorporating lessons on color theory, design principles, and fabric selection can further refine their craft and improve the overall appeal of their creations. Beyond technical skills, effective skill development programs also can emphasize on essential business competencies. Training in areas such as pricing strategies, inventory management, marketing, and customer relations can empower women and adolescent girls to establish and sustain their own embroidery businesses.

The project aims to promote skill development and income generation through embroidery among rural women and adolescent girls of Angadh and Karodiya village of Vadodara district of Gujrat state. By learning these skills, they can contribute to their family's income, improving their financial situation. This project was undertaken to provide them with the necessary training and support to develop their talents in embroidery. Learning new skills can enable women to pursue self-employment, allowing them to earn income for their families. This is particularly important as modern economic pressures often require all family members to contribute. The skill development project aims to empower women by teaching them skills that encourage self-employment. This not only helps them become economically independent but also improves their standard of living. The project supports women in achieving financial stability and a better quality of life.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Planning of the Project***

Planning of activity helps in execution of the project and it answers the major questions as to where, when, who, and how regarding the project. The project was undertaken to train rural woman in using marketing and e-marketing techniques for income generation product in order to make it more successful in collaboration with CSR department of Reliance Industrial Limited, Vadodara.

### ***Selection of Target Group for the Project***

It was decided to work for the rural women and adolescent girl in collaboration with Reliance Industrial Limited as both project worker and organization had common objectives and aim to achieve. The project worker, in collaboration with Reliance Industries Limited's CSR department, visited four villages namely Rampura, Vakhatpura, Angadh, and Karodiya. After assessing interest and willingness to develop skills in income generation products two villages, Angadh and Karodiya, of Vadodara district of Gujrat state were selected for the project. Meetings were held with women and adolescent girls in both villages to discuss the initiative and its potential impact. A total of 35 beneficiaries 17 from Angadh and 18 from Karodiya expressed their enthusiasm and commitment for participating in the project.

### ***Implementation of the Project***

The initiative fostered self-employment, adaptability, and entrepreneurship, ensuring continued embroidery practice post-training. By integrating traditional skills with modern marketing, this project contributed to women's empowerment and sustainable livelihood development. The training was divided into three parts:

- Training on embroidery stitches
- Training on crafting embroidery products using these stitching techniques
- Training on marketing the embroidered products

A training for creating embroidery products was conducted through both demonstrations and workshops by a project worker and the expert. The project worker and the expert guided beneficiaries at each stage of the embroidery product making process.

The project worker helped women and adolescent girls to develop their abilities and creativity by teaching them different embroidery stitches. Twenty different types of stitches were taught. After practicing on small samples, the project worker guided women and adolescent girls to apply their embroidery skills on larger products, such as tote bags, cushion covers, pouches, hair bows, scarfs, dupattas, and more. This step allowed them to gain hands-



on experience with larger items, helping them improve their techniques and confidence while creating functional, marketable products. With guidance from the project worker, they worked on creating fully embroidered products such as tote bags, cushion covers, pouches, hair bow, dupattas and scarfs. The production of embroidery products began after the completion of the training, with the target group. The project worker explained the concept of marketing to women and adolescent girls, focusing on the 4Ps—Product, Price, Promotion, and Place—and emphasized their importance for successful marketing. She also guided them on how to create business accounts on WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, empowering them to effectively sell their products. Additionally, the project worker provided valuable information about Mahila E-Haat and its benefits. As part of this effort, the project worker created an Instagram page called "Colorful Embroidery." This platform provides women with an opportunity to expand their reach and grow their online businesses by selling their products and showcasing their handcrafted embroidered work. By utilizing Instagram, they can effectively promote their products and attract some wider buyers.

### ***Evaluation of the Project***

A reaction scale was constructed to evaluate the project after the completion of the training project. The reaction scale included sections related to training, opinions for project worker and expert, and reactions for selected products and stitches.

## **RESULTS AND OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT**

### ***Background Information of the Participants***

the higher percentage (51.42 %) of the women and adolescent girls belonged to the age group of 20-30 years. The forty-eight (48.57%) percent of the women and adolescent girls had education up to higher secondary. More than half (57.14 %) of the women and adolescent girls were unmarried whereas forty-two (42.85 %) percent of them were married. More than Half (54.28%) of the women and adolescent girls reported a monthly family income less than ₹30,000. Forty-two percent stated that their family monthly income ranged between ₹30,000 and ₹40,000. The Majority (74.28%) of the women and adolescent girls had not received any vocational training before this project.

### ***Reactions for Training***

majority (77.14%) of the women and adolescent girls participate in this project to learn new skill whereas sixty-five (65.71%) percent of them participated in this project to learn embroidery. More than half of the (54.28%) women and Adolescent girls participated in this project to utilize their free time. The above table indicates that majority (77.14%) of the women and adolescent girls were able to attend each session of the training program.

All the Women and Adolescent girls reported that

- The information provided in the training was easy to understand.
- They were able to make embroidery products by their own self after attending the training.
- They were able to teach Embroidery to their friends, neighbors, or family members in the future.

Higher percentage (97.14%) of women and adolescent girls found the training helpful in generating income, whereas very few (2.85) reported that the training did not helped them in income generation. high majority of the (94.28%) women and adolescent girls were very satisfied with the project. Very few (5.71%) of them were moderately satisfied with the project as few of them were not able to attend every session of the training due to health issues and they were out of the town. The above table indicates that high majority (91.42%) of the women and adolescent girls learnt about different types of marketing during training

### ***Reactions for Selected Embroidery Stitches and Products***

The above table revealed that high majority of the women and adolescent girls learnt successfully French Knot Stitch (94.28%), Chain Stitch (85.71%) and Stem Stitch (80%). The reactions of the women and adolescent girls indicates that out of 20 stitches they were able to use more than 15 stitches successfully. It also highlighted that Bullion Stitch and Chevron Stitch were found difficult to learn by more number of them and hence, its use was found less by women in production of the products. It indicates that more training should be provided for certain stitches. Little less than the majority (57.14%) of the women and adolescent girls enjoyed making cushion cover. Forty-two (42.85%) percent of them enjoyed making hair bow, whereas more than one fourth of the women and adolescent girls enjoyed making embroidery on tote bag (34.38%), pouches (28.57%) and dupatta (25.71%).

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings highlight the significant impact of the skill development and income generation program on women and adolescent girls. The training program provided them with essential embroidery skills, marketing knowledge, and sales management techniques, ultimately empowering them to become financially independent. A majority



of the participants belonged to the 20-30 age group, with varying educational backgrounds, family structures, and income levels. The training was well received, all the participants successfully learnt embroidery techniques and expressed satisfaction with the quality of instruction. The program played a crucial role in self-employment, as 97.14% of the women found it helpful in generating income. Marketing and sales training proved to be highly effective, with all of the participants gaining knowledge of marketing techniques. A significant portion (94.28%) planned to use social media platforms for product promotion. The exhibitions conducted at Reliance Mall and the Faculty of Family and Community Sciences provided real-world experience in selling their products. The third exhibition, in particular, showcased remarkable success, with sales reaching ₹4,377 and 46 products sold. Furthermore, the participants demonstrated growing confidence in marketing their products. Many have now started selling online, with Instagram emerging as a key platform. The success of the exhibitions and the transition to online sales indicate that these women and adolescent girls were well-equipped to sustain their businesses independently. Overall, the Project reaffirms that skill development programs, when combined with practical exposure and marketing strategies, can serve as a powerful tool for economic empowerment and self-sufficiency. The participants' ability to apply their learning to real-world scenarios highlights the effectiveness of such initiatives in fostering entrepreneurship and financial independence among women and adolescent girls.

The completion of the project confirms its effectiveness and usefulness for the target group. After receiving the training, the participants successfully developed embroidery skills and generated income by selling their handcrafted products. This training empowered them to become economically independent.

The methods used in the training were well-received by the women, as they found them engaging and easy to learn. Even after the project's completion, they continued practicing and expanding their embroidery work, which has contributed to an improved standard of living.

Thus, it can be concluded that, such type of training programme gives opportunity of self-employment to rural women and adolescent girl. Rural women & adolescent girl gets exposed to new environment. They get opportunity to participate in the demonstration and workshops, through learning by doing. Women also received training in art of marketing as well as record and account keeping and were trained to organize the exhibitions. Rural women and adolescent girl require constant support, guidance, encouragement and motivation. Therefore, while planning any project for them, these requirements should be kept in mind. The project helped women and adolescent girl to increase their self-confidence by becoming economically independent. The project helped them to become economically independent. After completing the project, women and adolescent girls received orders from Reliance, of 150 pouches for the Women's Day celebration. The project worker played a crucial role in supporting them by facilitating connections with experts, helping them establish and sustain their businesses successfully.

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