



taanka

# THREADS OF CHANGE



**LEARNING  
PAPER** 2020



This Learning Paper is designed to share the lessons, successes and challenges of establishing the social enterprise and brand, **Taanka**, by **Community World Service Asia (CWSA)** and is intended to capture the narrative in establishing the brand as a guide for other potential social enterprises.



# WHAT IS TANKA?

From **2015** to **2018**, **YCare International** and **Community World Service Asia** worked in partnership to improve financial resilience and promote gender equity of disadvantaged young women in Umerkot, Pakistan. The project addressed extreme poverty, food insecurity and gender inequality faced by young women, their households and communities, and contributed to young women having safer, happier lives, with reduced poverty.

Tanka emerged as a by-product of this project and was launched<sup>1</sup> in 2016 as a social enterprise to meet several needs; to promote the finest handcrafted amalgamation of contemporary designs with traditional stitches, produced by rural women artisans from interior Sindh, Pakistan and facilitate collaboration between the women artisans and urban designers, design students, commercial textile companies and fashion brands, to reflect consumers' demands in ethnic designs.

<sup>1</sup> Ycare International, UKAID and Danish Centre for Culture and Development (DCCD)





# WHY WAS TAANKA NEEDED?

Sindh Province is socially diverse with a history of marginalised communities. Many of the conflict drivers which culminated at the time of partition have never been fully resolved. Income inequality between the affluent groups and the most vulnerable comprising of native Sindhis who inhabit the rural areas, is increasing with each passing day<sup>2</sup>.

Rural women in Sindh have been gifted with the skill of traditional hand embroidery and engaged in handcrafting products for household use. Many home-based artisans also sold their products in local markets or through middlemen from urban centers who would approach them in their villages. The artisans faced many challenges in earning a fair income through sales of their hard-worked products.

Due to cultural mobility constraints, rural women artisans found it difficult to connect with urban markets directly. When attempts to access urban markets were made through middle-men, they would often be exploited by not being paid fair or minimum wages or in some cases were not paid at all as the middlemen would disappear and the artisans had no means of following up with them. Since they lacked numeracy and basic business negotiation skills, they were unable to price their products profitably or market them effectively.

These artisans were not organised as groups, worked on an ad-hoc basis and were mostly unfamiliar with the urban market trends and designs. Without any exposure to urban markets or professional guidance and mentoring, they were unable to meet the urban market quality standards and demands. Furthermore, the artisans' skills were restricted to the traditional use of colors and patterns which were not demanded in most local and urban markets anymore.

Through skills and knowledge enhancement activities, community participation and activities that focused on strengthening social cohesion, YCI and CWSA's project turned a traditional activity into an important income generating activity for young women. The quality of production improved and in two years' time these women artisans recorded an overall income of PKR 8.9 million earned collectively from 2015-2017 through production and sales of new products to urban markets and customers. By circulating in the market, this amount also strengthened the local economy of these poor rural communities. By the end of project, 94% of households lived above the poverty line (\$2 a day) compared to only 3% before the project<sup>3</sup>.

However, maintaining links with urban markets and managing resistance by male members of the community towards the mobility of rural women to urban markets was a challenge identified with the end of the project. The Sales & Marketing Agents (SMAs) that were trained under the project, and selected from within the communities and artisan groups, to help maintain the link with urban buyers also failed to meet their objectives and sustain the link due to several challenges. Most of the SMAs lacked understanding of the urban markets and were not able to effectively communicate the demands of the urban market to the rural artisans. Urban buyers demanded quality and timeline assurances which the SMAs were unable to provide. Since most of the men in the communities did not support the idea of the SMAs travelling to urban cities, they relied primarily on telecommunication which was an ineffective and unproductive in terms of understanding quality and product development requirements. The SMAs were also required to promote the artisans' products through various means which they were unable to do so without the proper communication, language and presentation skills and time dedication required.

**PKR 8.9  
MILLION**  
(USD 79,000) | Overall  
Recorded  
Income from  
Year **2015-17**

**94% OF  
HOUSEHOLDS**  
lived above the poverty line  
since year **2018**



Apart from overcoming the sustainability challenges outlined above, while working with artisans in Umerkot for almost three years, the market potential at a level for the artisans' products and their ability to harness it themselves was realised by the project team.

Conversely, the following issues were identified which required a localised organisational solution.

- Failure of the “Sales & Marketing Agents” approach and model. They were unable to connect to the vast urban market due to cultural and social constraints
- Creating and sustaining linkages with urban buyers which was challenging while operating from a village in Umerkot
- Urban buyers needed some mediating body that could understand their demand/requirements easily and help them in processing their orders, taking care of production, quality assurance, delivering the order in time, and even at times, in designing and finishing their product line as well
- Not all retailers in Pakistan have running design houses and in fact need services of designers and production houses working together under one umbrella

To enhance economic growth at the domestic level, it became vital to promote improved livelihoods for marginalised, rural women through the enhancement of the artisans' skills and developing market access and linkages to urban markets. It was calculated that the remunerative value of crafts would be enhanced by developing additional design varieties, which would appeal specifically to the urban market.





# HOW DOES TAANKA OPERATE?

As a social enterprise, Taanka acts as a link between rural artisans and urban buyers. Taanka seeks orders from retailers; once an order is received, specifications are shared with Taanka's team who then ensures the processing and completion of orders by the artisans in Umerkot and Thatta. Every purchase and order enables the artisans behind Taanka to use their talents to support themselves and their families. Taanka also allows for these women to collaborate with urban designers, design students and commercial textile companies and fashion brands, to reflect consumers' demands in ethnic designs. ensure the generation of sustainable economic livelihoods for these women.

Taanka is an **“all-women”** led enterprise; from product development and design, to quality assurance, production and finishing. The enterprise consciously works on **promoting gender equality** and employs and engages women team members at all stages of production, for example, product designing, quality assurance, product finishing and even marketing.



## HOW TAANKA ORIGINATED

## A STEP BY STEP JOURNEY

### SET-UP PHASE

### ACTION PHASE

### MARKET-POSITIONING PHASE

### SUSTAINABILITY PHASE

2012 - 2015

2015 - 2016

2016 - 2017

2018

2019

Start of Women Empowerment & Livelihood activities through Project in one district

Invested in community structures & neighboring communities to create an enabling environment

Formation of community structures, e.g., Steering Committees, Gender Activist Groups, Village Organizations, theatre groups, etc.

Communities mobilised & WEGs formed

Personal growth of women through skillbuilding, adult literacy & SRH trainings

Expansion of Women Empowerment & Livelihoods project to second district (Umerkot)

Enhanced inbuilt skills of rural women to meet modern textile and fashion market demand

Linkages made with design, academic and textile institutes to enhance rural artisan skills

Exposure visits of Artisans to urban markets and designers' meetings

Collaborative Workshops on contemporary handcrafting and design with students & Faculty

Change of approach from SMAs - a need for an intermediary body recognized

Taanka emerged as a social enterprise brand and launched through the Pakistan Fashion Design Council

Launch of Taanka Social media & digital marketing. Product and Clientele Expansion & Merchandising

Fashion Designers consulted for product development & Sales and first brand catalogued developed

Featured in various handicrafts and cultural exhibitions across Pakistan

Taanka starts receiving B2B orders from fashion and textile retailer

Taanka Business Plan developed & Website launched

B2B sales continued & New Product ranges developed



# ORGANOGRAM (INTERIM)

Since Taanka is operating through an informal organisational structure, using limited human resources, the functioning units are small and work on multiple production processes. Most of the product finishing and tailoring is currently outsourced through the Product Development Unit.

The staff currently working on Taanka are CWSA team members from various departments, such as **Programs**, **Communications** and **Operations** who contribute a certain percentage of their time to Taanka's operational, product development and marketing tasks.

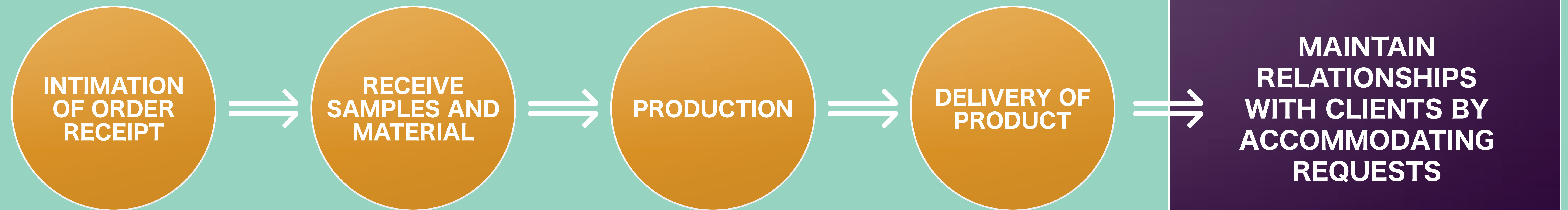


**CWSA** and **DFID's** project team, with the support of partnering universities, other CWSA units, design consultants and a marketing and PR agency, were all engaged in establishing Taanka. This involved attaining an NOC with the district government, signing MoUs with the Indus Valley University and the Textile Institute of Pakistan, designing the Taanka logo and trademark registration. The Pakistan fashion Design council also played a pivotal role in launching Taanka in the fashion industry in Pakistan. We signed a contract with them through one of our design consultants who served as a member of their governing board.

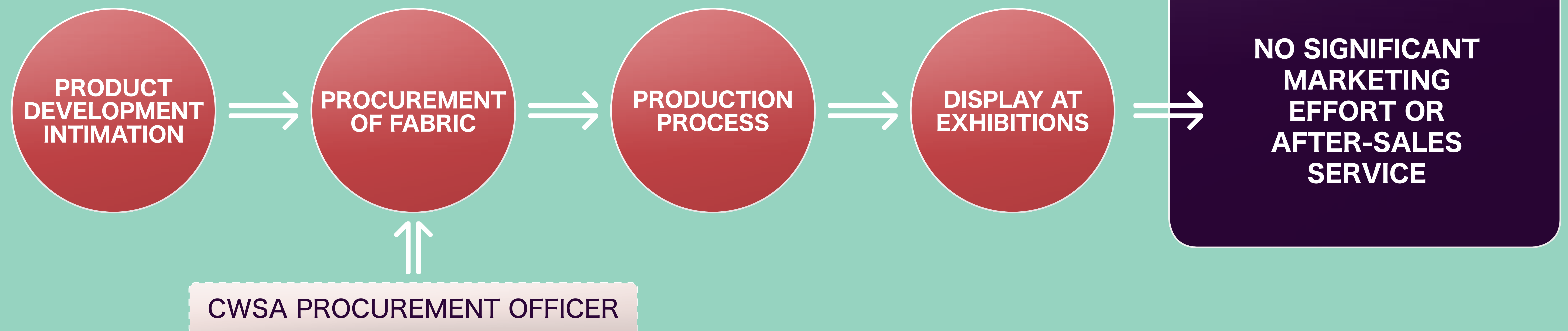


# TAANKA ORDERS PROCESS FLOW

## ORDER FROM CLIENT (B2B):



## TAANKA'S OWN MERCHANDISE (B2C):





# WOMEN ENTERPRISE GROUPS – THE FORCE BEHIND TAANKA

A total of **721 artisans in Umerkot** and **250 artisans in Thatta** have been trained and have learned the importance of working in a group. They are trained to use design in crafts, on the importance of quality assurance, time management, pricing and negotiation skills. These artisans have had experience of working with urban retailers, understand their requirements well and can work under pressure to complete orders in time. They have been divided into location specific groups of artisans who specialize in special types of Taankas (stitches). These groups are called Woman Enterprise Groups (WEGs) and were initially supervised by project<sup>4</sup> appointed officers who acted as a link between the artisans and the projects and supervised the quality of the products being produced. This role is now conducted by the CWSA/Taanka Enterprise Development Officer.

Women Enterprise Groups have been established in every village, with each WEG comprising between twenty to twenty-five women. Every WEG has been assigned a quality assurance supervisor from among the artisans' pool. These groups ensure that all products are handcrafted and embroidered upon as per market and client requirements and that artisans

within the WEGs are appointed tasks as per their specialized skills. **The WEGs play a pivotal role in mobilising communities**, ensuring community ownership and working professionally while respecting their societal norms.

Among each WEG, artisans with the most experience or best embroidery skills are trained as Quality Assurance Supervisors to facilitate WEGs to monitor product quality and timelines, and support Taanka by mentoring fellow artisans on:

- Understanding importance of timelines, cleanliness of fabric and raw materials and respecting working hours at the vocational centres
- Following quality guidelines
- Recognising the differences of quality in raw materials
- Managing large orders and sharing responsibilities



# TAANKA – GIVING **KAMLA** THE HOPE TO LIVE & STITCH UP HER DREAMS

**Kamla** is a **16 years old artisan** and member of the Women Enterprise Groups (WEGs) working for Taanka. She belongs to the Kharoro Charan village of district Umerkot and lives with her seven siblings and their widowed mother in a one-room house. Their father passed away two years ago. Kamla and all her siblings are currently unmarried. While their two youngest brothers attend school, none of the others are currently studying. **The highest any of the older siblings have studied is till 8th grade.**

With tailoring being a sort of family profession, as their late father worked as a tailor in Karachi, Kamla's eldest brother also worked as a tailor, for which he left the village for Karachi soon after he graduated from class 8, to learn the skill from his father and earn an income for the family. Two more of Kamla's brothers are also currently working near the village to earn a livelihood for their family. One runs a general store of his own, while the other mends embroidery machines. Together the two brothers earn around **PKR 15,000 (Approx. USD 95) a month.**

**Taanka not only employs Kamla, but two of her sisters as well.** All three sisters work as artisans for the social enterprise brand that

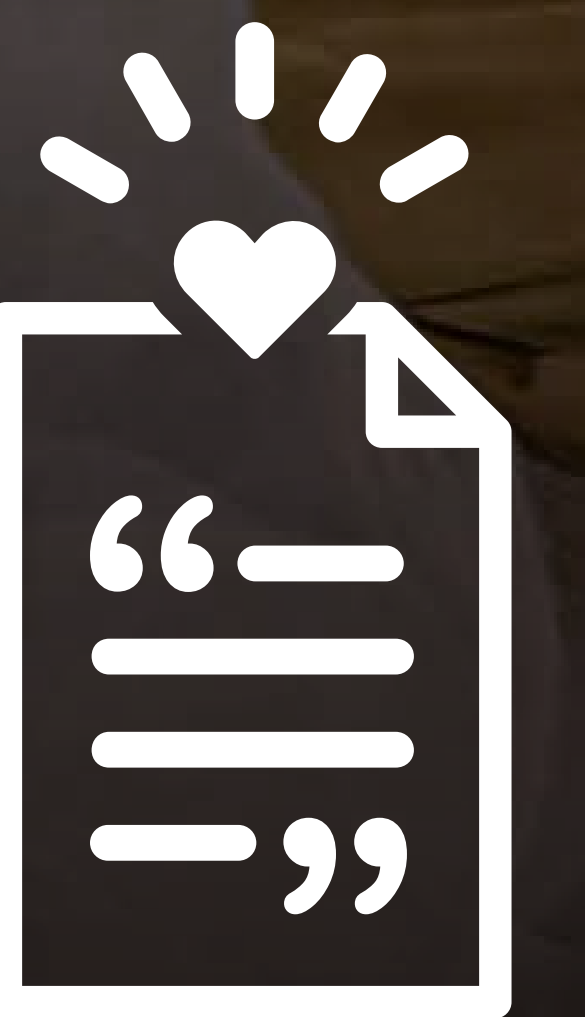
sells high-end fashion and home products in large urban centres like Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad. The sisters worked very hard on the handicrafts they produced and earned well from it whenever they got orders. Kamla was the most highly educated among all three of them and had further enhanced her skills. She really enjoyed studying as well but had to leave school after she turned 13 years old as none of her brothers could accompany her to school.

**“Kamla's education expenses beyond primary level were paid for by my brother. I wish she could continue, but this is not possible. How will we make both ends meet if she leaves her handicraft work and starts studying again?”** expressed Kamla's mother.

Financial problems in Kamla's household heightened when her eldest brother returned to Kharoro Charan from Karachi because of his receding health and a newly diagnosed mental disorder where he kept forgetting and repeating things. With the little savings that he returned with, he planned to build a house.

**“Our brother first constructed a toilet as we did not have a toilet in our house. Soon after the toilet construction was completed, he collapsed and has never been normal ever since. The construction work was stopped immediately because he needed treatment and the money he had saved had to be prioritized for his medical treatment,”** Kamla said.

The brother's health has now exacerbated to a situation where the family experiences sudden and repeated episodes of aggressive and violent behavior and angry verbal outbursts. He also breaks and tears apart the family's belongings.





In most of rural Sindh, it is considered against the local culture for women to work outside their homes. Therefore, many women utilize their time working on ethnic embroideries and stitching apparel and home accessories; a skill that is passed on through generations. As per local tradition, the women are supposed to hand-embroider and stitch products for their own dowry or that of their daughters. Keeping this ancient local tradition alive, Kamla and her sisters learnt embroidery at a very young age at home and hand-crafted most of their own clothes. Kamla particularly enjoyed this the most. Before working for Taanka, her sisters and she used to receive apparel design and embroidery orders from the Gumbar community in the neighboring village.

***“The money we made through personal orders was far too less compared to our expenses, raw materials or the time we spent on making them. Collectively, the three of us hardly made around PKR 5000 (Approx. USD 31) a month.”***

Kamla herself has not participated in any of the vocational trainings that WEG members of Taanka had been engaged in. She enhanced her in-born handcrafting skills through learning from her aunts and sisters who actually took part in the trainings organized by Community World Service Asia and its partners' project to develop and strengthen the Taanka brand.

***“I feel motivated to work on new designs every day because the wages I earn through Taanka orders are fair. I learn new designs every day through the orders we receive from urban clients. The work is entirely different from what we did growing up. Designs are diverse, the fabric type is very thin, and there are different kinds and colors of threads and needles. In the past we have worked only on Pashani fabric, but through Taanka, I had the opportunity of embroidering designs on pure silk fabric too,”*** shared Kamla excitedly.

Kamla says that their mirror work is really appreciated by designers and they are receiving more orders for mirror work. Currently, she is embroidering mirrors on a daisy colored jacket. The three sisters collectively make PKR 25000 (Approx. USD 160) monthly through Taanka orders now.

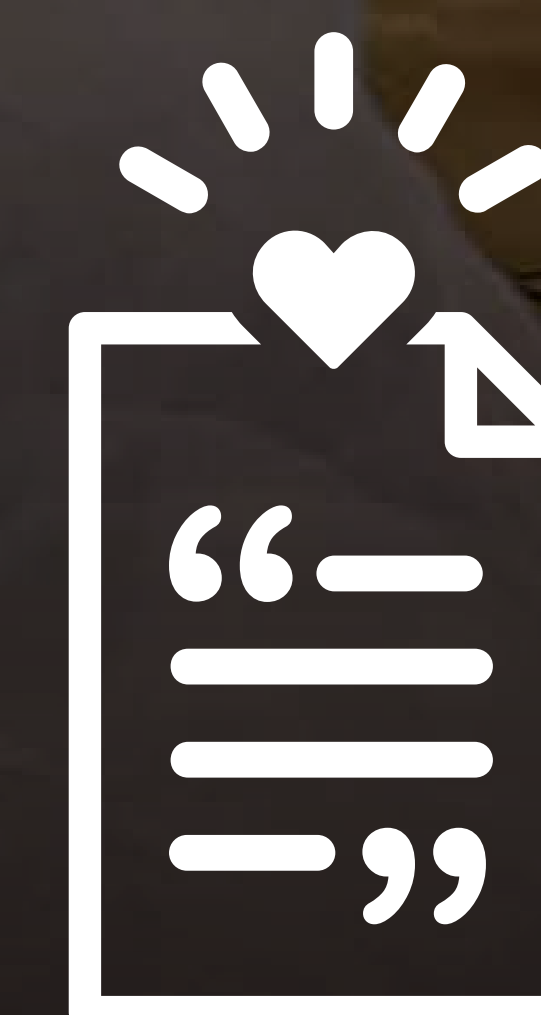
***“The majority of what we earn is spent on our brother's treatment. We also meet other household expenses with our earnings such as food, fetching water, and paying for our younger brother's education expenses. Financial conditions of other artisans***

***working with Taanka are also rapidly changing for the better”.***

***“I think women should not hesitate to learn new things. When we learn new things, we bring change in our lives and the lives of our loved ones”***, says Kamla, wanting to motivate other aspiring artisans.

Kamla is an expert in hand embroidery now but she also wants to learn modern tailoring in the future. With the little she is able to save after contributing to all the family expenses, Kamla wants to fulfill some of her own dreams too.

***“When I had to discontinue education, I felt very upset because my friends continued education but I could not. The day I am able to save up a lot of money from our Taanka earnings, I will go back to school, buy myself beautiful payal (anklets), matha patti (head jewelry), restart the construction work of our home, and will learn English. When I was in school, English was my favorite subject”***, she said.

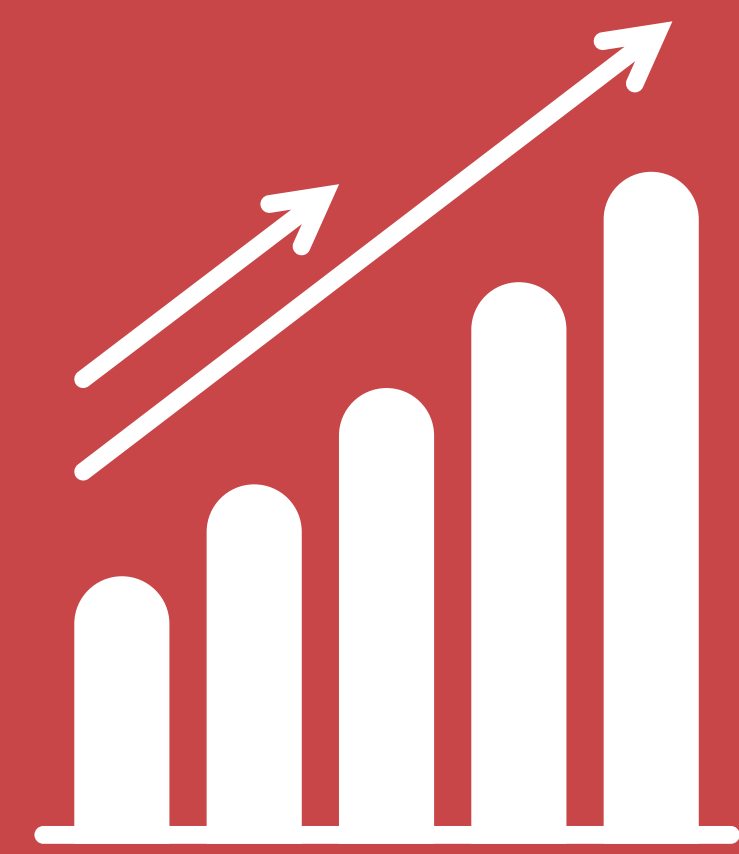




# BUSINESS PLAN

A Marketing and Business Plan (MBP) became essential to provide **Community World Service Asia (CWSA)** with a **roadmap to promote Taanka's growth and sustainability** in the short, medium and long-term. To develop a MBP, CWSA approached a business and marketing firm, **BRAMERZ**, and shared the Taanka journey, its existing business model and mode of operandi with them. This was followed by a series of detailed meetings, consultations and presentations among the two parties; BRAMERZ and Taanka's management team. Field staff and community mobilisers, working closely and directly with the WEGs were also engaged in the consultation processes that eventually lead to the development of the final MBP.

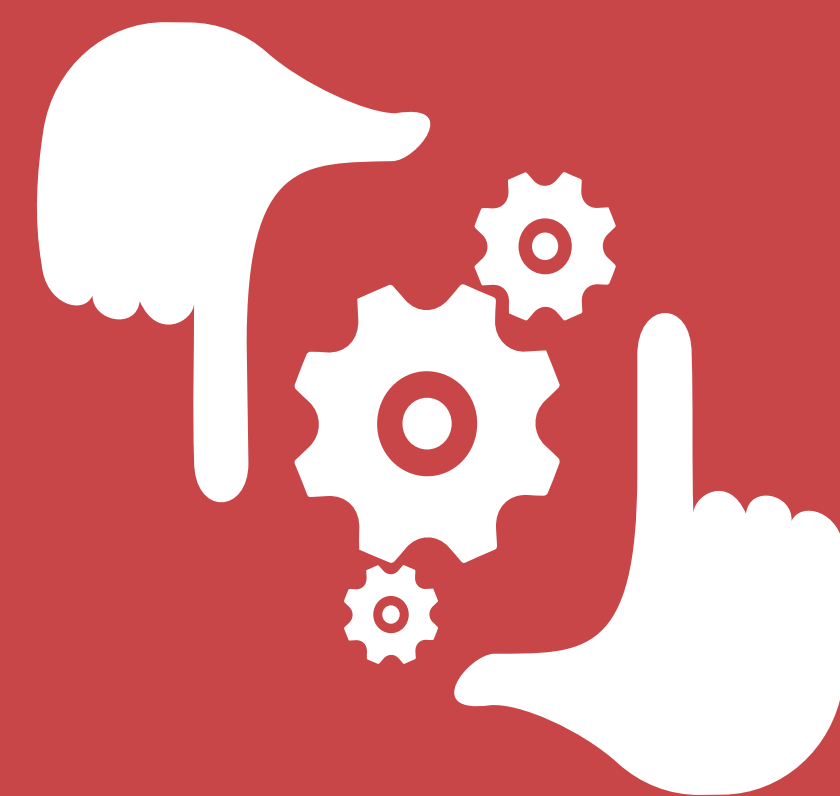
## THE MBP PLAN AIMED TO



Define Taanka's structure and its development in the medium and long-term



Define the running costs of Taanka and their suggested sources of income to ensure its sustainability & independence from external finding

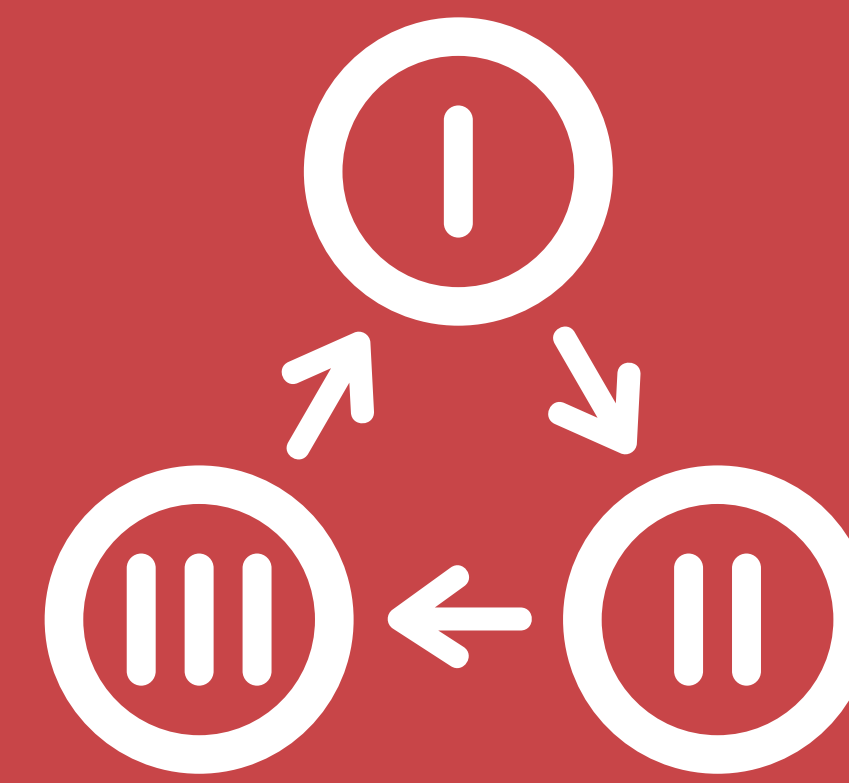


Define the scope of work of Taanka and what services it would provide its key stakeholders

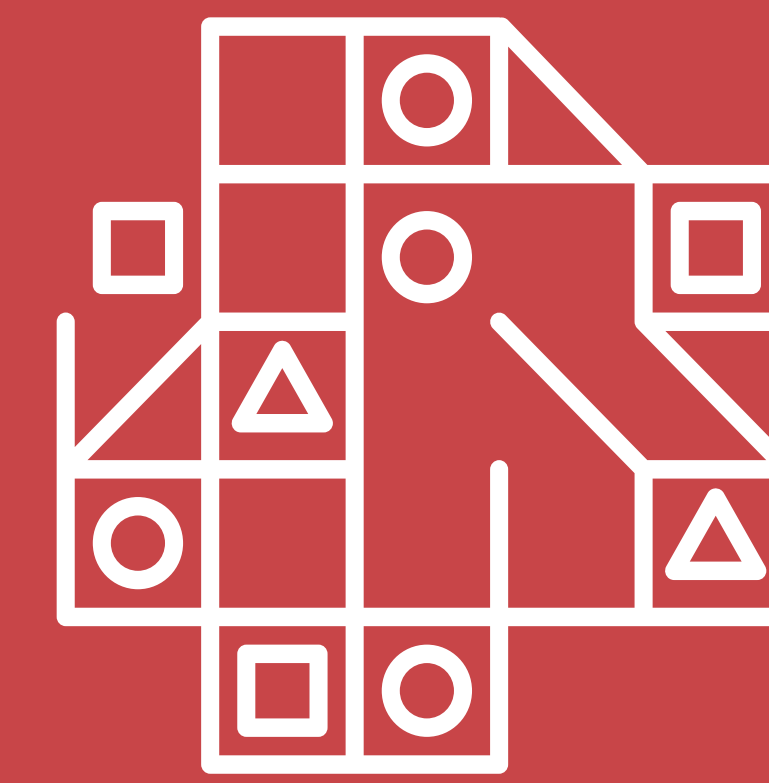
- Detailed marketing plan
- Communications plan with a focus on its positioning and advertising
- Sales forecasting over the next five years



Conduct competitor analysis and define how and why Taanka is different from them



Identify if there is an existing coordination mechanism for similar social enterprises already in the market



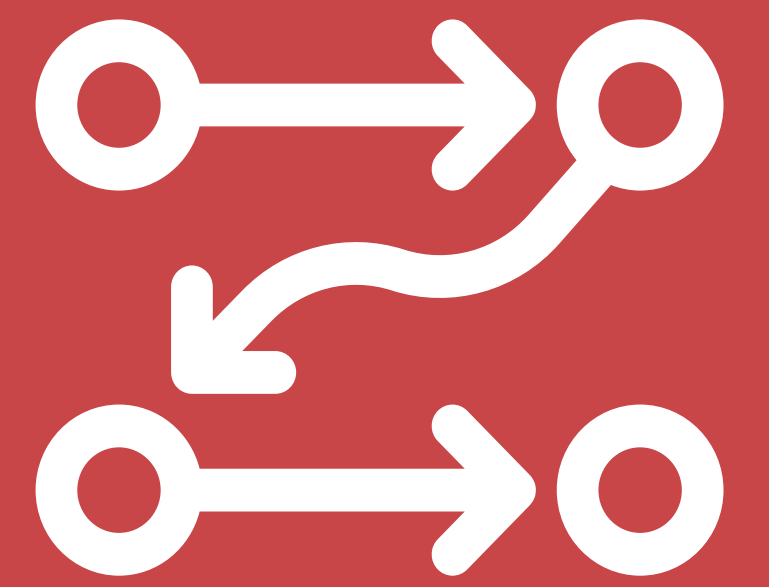
Provide organisational management structural modification and new skill set (if required) to meet the requirements of the business plan



Project the time to reach the break-even status from the present funding and donor funds required till then



Define the target market & the potential customers



Provide a detailed map of the value chain and Taanka's role and position in that chain (including competitors, potential allies and broken down in private, public and third sector organisations)



# THE PROPOSED BUSINESS MODEL

The business model for Taanka considers business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-customer (B2C) services as the pillars and main components of its future sustainability plan. B2B activities involve conducting business with other businesses, whereas B2C involves customers directly.

APPROACH	HOW TO DO IT	PLATFORM & TOOLS
B2B	<div><div>1) Scale up sales to existing customers and explore similar new customers.</div><div>2) Design catalogues of existing work</div></div>	<div><div>1) Service pret brands (men, women, children, accessories)</div><div>2) Service luxury designer wear (men, women, children, accessories)</div><div>3) Service home textiles.</div><div>4) Service stationery, jewelry, gifting, corporate giveaways, etc.</div></div>
B2C (OFFLINE)	<div><div>1) Design own products and develop catalogues</div></div>	<div><div>1) Retail own products via exhibitions and trade fairs in an organized fashion</div><div>2) Retail own products via shared rack space at multi-brand stores &amp; mall carts/ Alternate channels</div></div>
B2C (ONLINE)	<div><div>1) Design e-commerce- based web portal and design products and develop catalogues</div></div>	<div><div>1) Retail own products from owned website</div><div>2) Retail own products via marketplaces</div><div>3) Retail own products via global crafts marketplaces</div></div>
EXPLORING CROWD FUNDING	<div><div>Hold events where Taanka products are showcased and investments are elicited. One event to be held every alternate year.</div></div>	<div><div>Crowd funding campaigns</div></div>
MONETIZATION OF CONTENT	<div><div>Exploring various options of extracting revenues from already developed marketing collateral</div></div>	<div><div>Create monetize able content around embroidery &amp; taankas</div></div>





# WHEN THE ROAD BECAME ROCKY – CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

- Lack of proper structure due to insufficient resource - As mentioned above, Taanka's team mainly comprises of CWSA's staff that are contributing a percentage of their time so there is no dedicated staff only for Taanka. Taanka is now surviving on a breakeven basis so it cannot afford full-time staff that is required to maintain a proper working structure
- Maintaining Quality Assurance (QA) through production stages - With the team split up between various locations; Lahore, Umerkot and Karachi, it becomes challenging to ensure quality through each channel. There are outsourced vendors also engaged in this process who are not familiar or cautious of maintaining a certain quality standard either. Taanka currently has only one Enterprise Development and QA officer in field for whom working with 900 artisans and ensuring quality with each is difficult some times
- Competition in the form of big brand names - Pakistan has a thriving Fashion and Textile industry who invest heavily in product development and marketing. These brands also have diverse design ranges and offer many varieties of embroidered products, many of which are machine-embroidered and are sold at low prices and has lead to a massive price-war in the market. Many people are unable to differentiate or see value in hand-crafted products and mass-embroidered ones which leads them to buy products that are cheaper and fancier in comparison
- Lack of digital and physical retail space - A physical and digital presence in the market is essential to reach the target market in Pakistan. It increases access for buyers, specially for the B2C business model. Due to financial constraints Taanka has been unable to rent out a physical market space or invest money in digital marketing
- Production costs high – many buyers do not recognise the worth of hand-embroidered products as there is a lot of machine embroidery available in the market. Many people do not realise that hand-embroidery is more exclusive and time-consuming which is why Taanka's wage-rate per hour spent on embroidery to artisans is higher. Transportation costs between Umerkot and urban markets add to the production cost as well as the finishing of products which is also out-sourced
- Changing tastes and fashion trends within the handicraft industry - The fashion and handicraft industry is expanding in the region, with more people demanding increased finesse and modernization of traditionally handcrafted products. There is also a status competition among the majority of buyers who prefer to buy well-recognised brands, comparison to which Taanka is still fairly new and unrecognised





# WHEN THE ROAD BECAME ROCKY – CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

- Lack of capacity to fulfil orders on time - B2B orders means working with already well-established brands and businesses who have large teams and operate efficiently to meet seasonal and consumer demands. With a small team and multiple tiers of production, it is often difficult to meet the demanding timelines of fashion and commercial retail brands
- Lack of a proper infrastructure and communication facilities. There is a lack of direct contact with WEGS which is sometimes essential to gauge their skills, work environment and aptitude to take up certain orders. The team relies heavily on one staff who is located near to the WEGS. Other than that, most artisans do not have phone or smartphones through which communication could be improved. Courier services to their villages and Umerkot city also takes days from urban cities which increases production time and resource expenditure
- Women's access to financial services and establishing a transparent and easy to access payment process in villages has also been a challenge
- Taanka artisans are confined to rural areas, small cities and untapped markets. Though many exposure and capacity building opportunities are provided through Taanka so far, there is still a need to explore more in terms of learning more skills and meeting major market demands

## EXPLORING WAYS TO ADDRESS EXISTING CHALLENGES

Taanka has been trying and testing various approaches to find ways to sustain itself and provide a consistent source of income to the artisans engaged with the brand. We have adopted some of the recommendations provided in the MBP and have explored production of more product designs and ranges. In the last two years, Taanka produced and launched a Summer Apparel range, a Work Essentials range and a Home and Lifestyle products range. Catalogues were developed for each range. This helped in untapping some market needs and widening our product range to compete better with brands and meet some of the changing tastes and market demands.

In late 2018, Taanka shifted all its product finishing, especially for its B2C product line, to Lahore from Karachi to improve quality assurance standards as the top management of the team is

located there and started out-sourcing finishing to carefully selected vendors and consultants under close supervision. Taanka also consulted merchandisers to pitch the brand to more businesses for the B2B model. Efforts are also ongoing to attain a shelf-space in exclusive contemporary handicrafts stores. Taanka also participated in various nation and city-wide exhibitions that helped in increasing product sales, brand recognition and gave us an opportunity to gauge market trends and the Taanka's own market and product positioning. An animated video that illustrated the Taanka production story and how each sale helps fight poverty in rural households was produced and shared on digital platforms like Facebook and Instagram. A website for Taanka was also developed and launched to improve its digital presence among its urban and international target markets.



# TAANKA BRINGS MORE MEANING INTO **BHAGWANI'S** LIFE

Bhagwani, the only sister of three brothers, is a 17 year old resident of Haji Chanesar Mari Village in Umerkot. Since her parents have passed away, Bhagwani lives under the guardianship of her brothers. Her two elder brothers earn daily wages for the family through construction work and carpet weaving. One of the elder brothers is married and has a large family of five children to support as well.

***“Before coming to the skills development center, I only had practice of basic stitching and embroidery at home. I sometimes earned a small amount of income, between PKR 300 to PKR 400 (US \$ 2 to 2.5) per month, through the products I made. I heard from my relative regarding the vocational center in our village and quickly joined it. From the trainings I received at the center, I learnt color variation, quality management and maintenance of cleanliness and finishing of products”***

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***“I now receive more orders as the villagers know that my knowledge has grown in stitching and designing. I receive orders for bed sheets, pillow covers and various apparels including shirts, sleeves work and saaris.”***

***“We have also accompanied our sales marketing agent, Maya, in the local markets and have seen how she receives orders through sample sharing and negotiation with buyers. I was very happy when I earned PKR 5000 (US \$ 31) from my orders in one month. When my brother’s child fell ill, I gladly lent him money for better treatment. I have bought raw materials to make dowry for myself. The artisans in the center got an order from a designer named Nida Azwar. We made saaris, sleeves and shirts for her. I earnt PKR 5000 from that order.”***

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Women in Bhagwani’s community rarely leave their homes or their village. ***“We were not even allowed to visit our uncle’s home which was nearby. This initiative has brought change in the mindsets of the men of our villages.”***

Seeing women’s skills growth and their support towards household spending and saving, the men have realized the importance of allowing the women to access work outside their residual villages. “We visit our uncle’s home easily now without any hesitation. Last year on Eid, my sister-in-law and I went to the market to buy new clothes, jewelry and mehndi for ourselves and nieces from the money I earned through the orders. I can happily say that we are living a much better and content life.” Bhagwani’s brothers support her and are proud to see her aptitude grow day by day.

***“Before, in times of celebrations, I use to ask money from my brothers and sometimes they were unable to provide. Now because I am earning, I have freedom to celebrate our traditions and festivities freely.”***

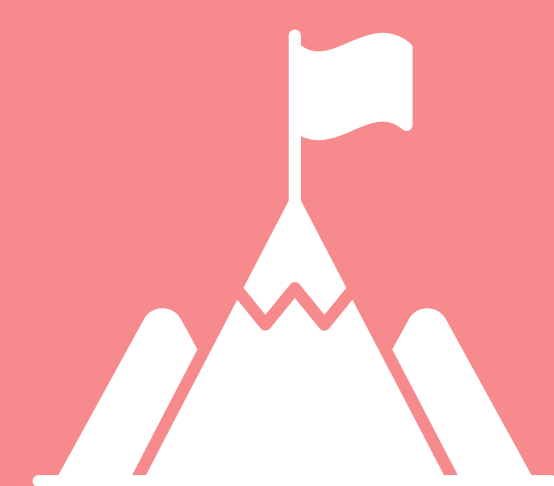




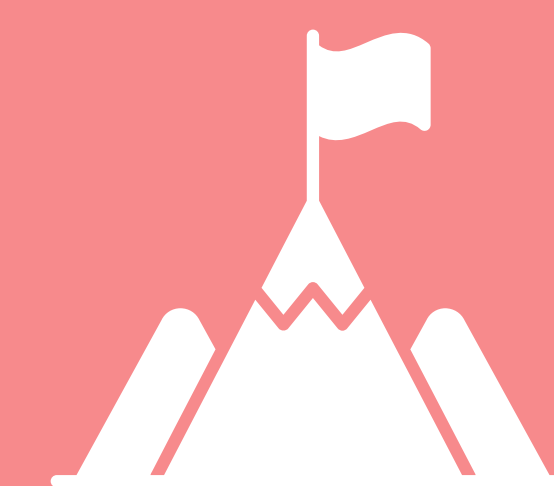
# TAANKA ACHIEVEMENTS & KEY MILESTONES<sup>5</sup>



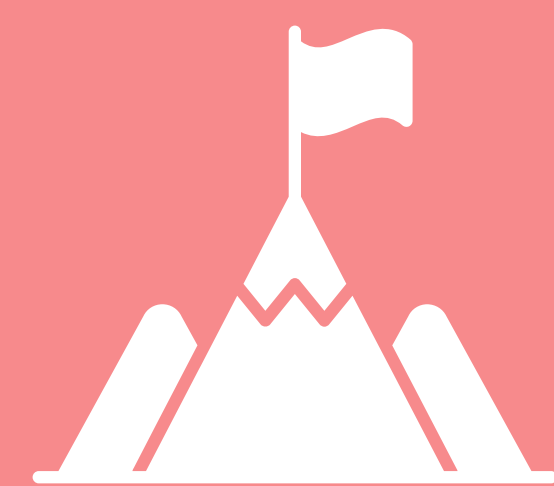
Our key success has been the sustainability of an income and livelihood of the artisans working under Taanka. Our aim has been the provision of a sustained income for the Taanka artisans so that women and young girls in rural Pakistan could be empowered, attain gender parity, have access to education, develop good health and wellbeing and have access to their basic rights and needs.



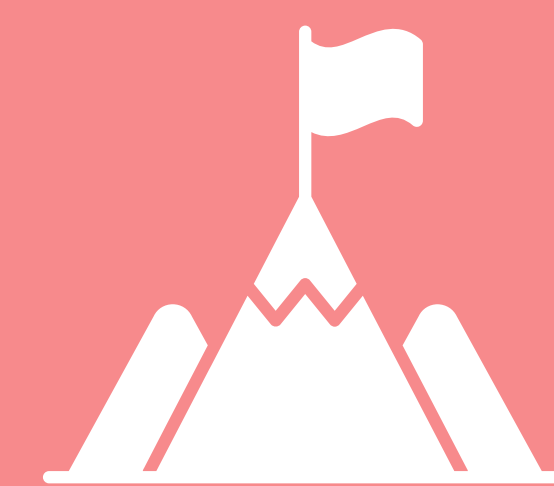
Initiation of **livelihood work for rural women** and **young girls**



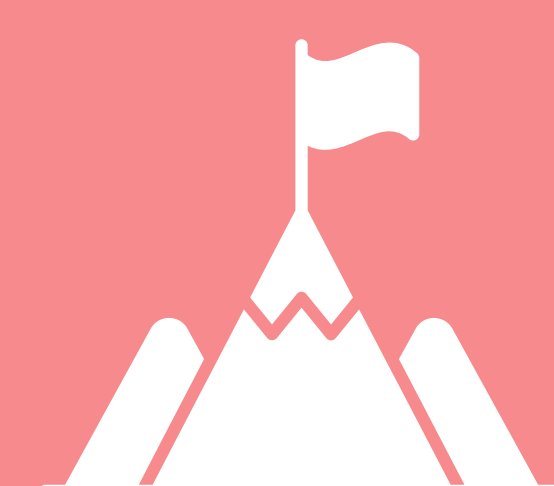
**700 women trained** on literacy and numeracy, traditional embroidery and life skills, and all 700 of them linked with urban markets



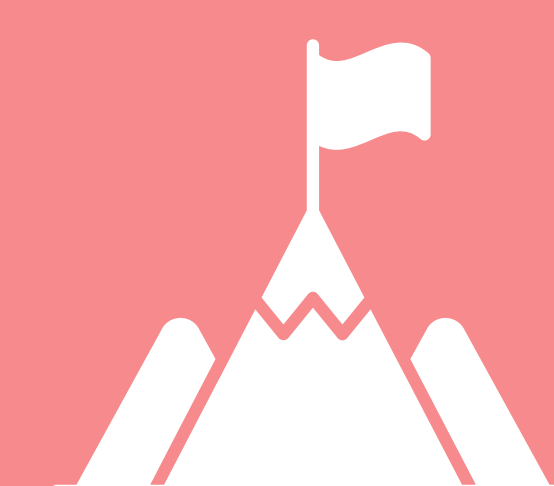
**Mobility of Women to Urban Hubs**



**Communities are financially sustainable as Taanka<sup>6</sup>** artisans are contributing towards household expenses and children's education



Compared to only 3% before the project began in 2015, **94% of households** (of the communities engaged with Taanka) are **now living above the poverty line (i.e., \$2 a day)**

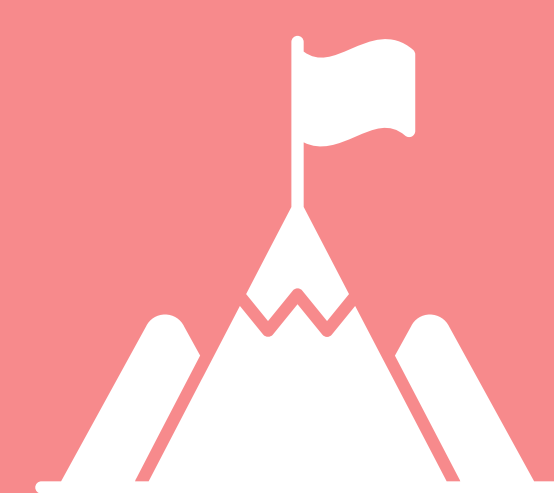
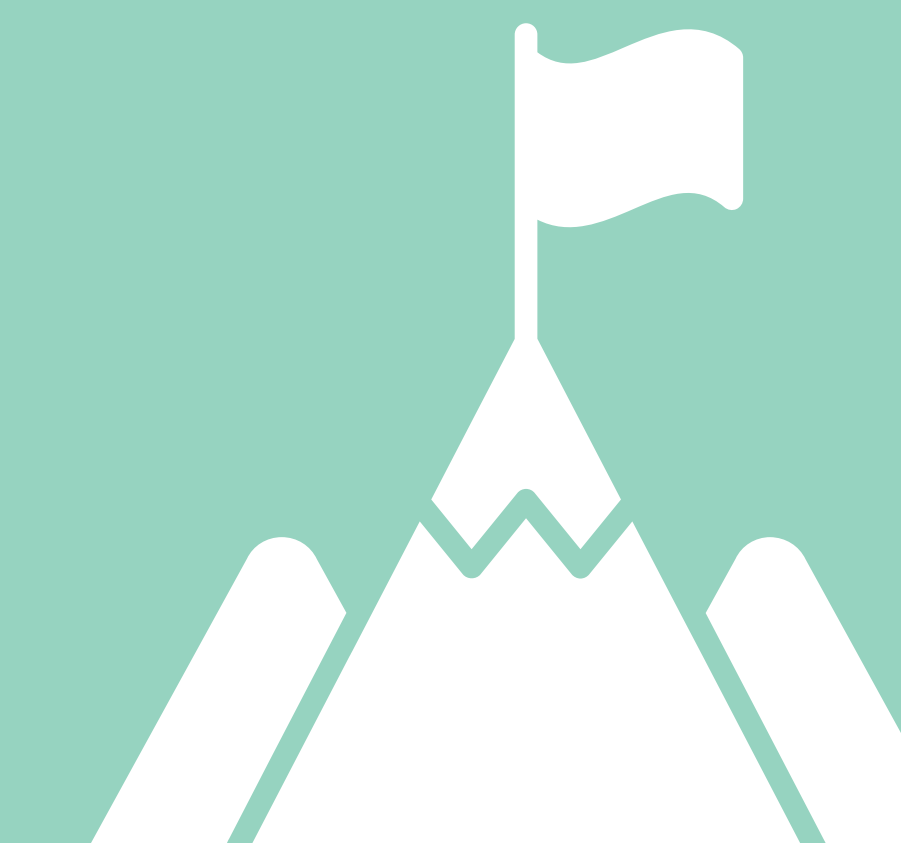


**72% women influence or take household decisions** compared to only 8% before Taanka

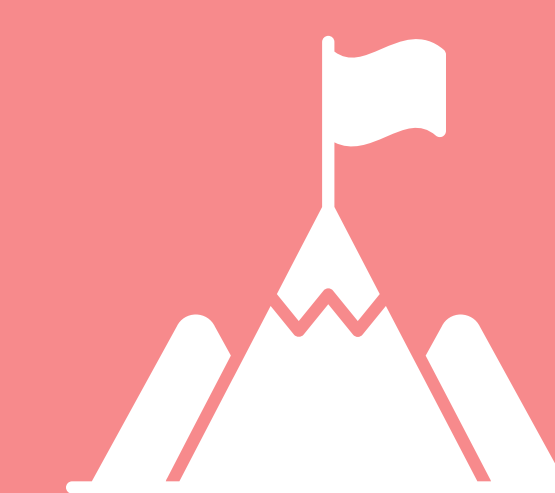
<sup>5</sup> Income Data 2019 maintained by MEAL unit of CWSA; YCI & CWSA Project Evaluation Report 2018

<sup>6</sup> This is verified through income data maintained by Project team. At the beginning of project a baseline survey was conducted, and then a mid-term review and evaluation was done. Additionally, income data was collected regularly during the project cycle as well. All of this data was compared with the baseline. The comparison gave us this information about increased income and sustainability of communities.

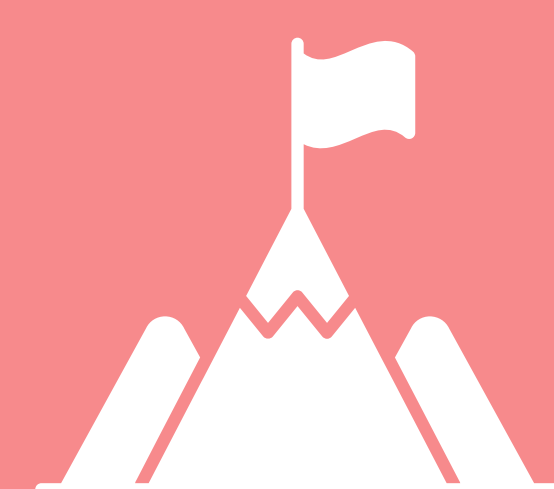




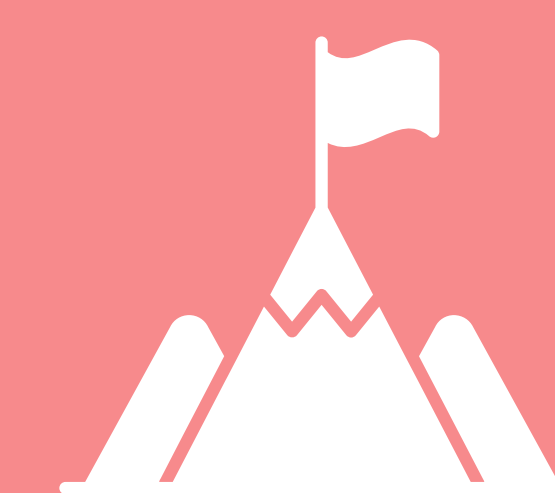
Influx of **income in target communities increased by Rs. 3.1 million** since April 2018 till Dec 2019 (Organic Earning<sup>7</sup> through B2B and B2C orders) > a 100% monthly income increase of Taanka artisans<sup>8</sup>



Community structures formed under the projects and as a support system for Taanka advocate for **gender mainstreaming and tackle gender related issues**



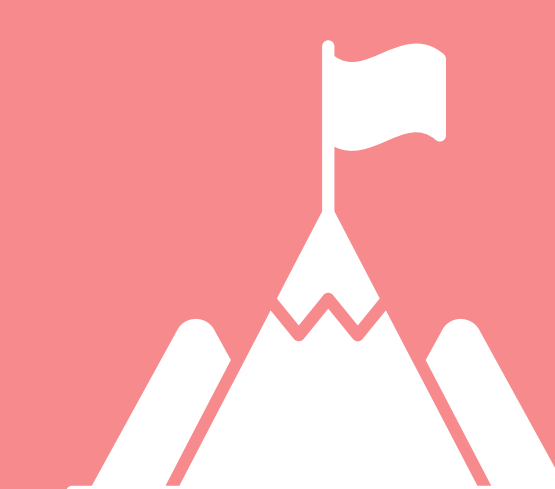
Women of Umerkot are **serving as role models for younger girls** and their parents



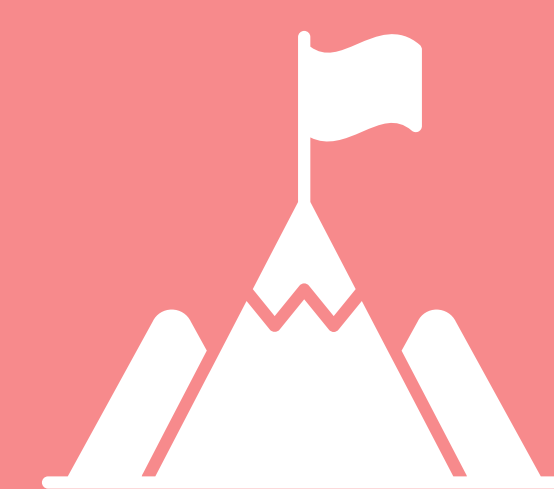
A strong correlation between women's increased income and **girls' education has been found > 66% girls** (of target communities) enrolled in schools since the start of the project



**More than 90 underage marriages in the 22 villages are delayed**



80% of community members reported a **more positive perception of women and their role in the household** compared to only 9% in 2015



**Domestic violence decreased<sup>9</sup>**

<sup>7</sup> Without any project funds injected and through direct servicing of sales of artisan skills / products | <sup>8</sup> Between 2018-2019

<sup>9</sup> A baseline study was conducted in 2015 before the start of the DFID project which recorded the stats on GBV in the target area. An M&E resreach was carried out in 2019 which reported this decrease in domestic violence following the project and establishment of Taanka



# HURMI: CHAMPIONING FOR CHANGE TO ACHIEVE GENDER JUSTICE

**“Daughters have always been preferred in our family, unlike other families in the village. My husband and I have never given priority to our two sons over our two daughters. We love all of them equally,”** said Hurmi, a resident of Haji Chanesar village in Umerkot. Hurmi is the Vice President of the Steering Committee of the village and a gender activist in the area.

**“My first child was a daughter. Normally in our community, daughters are considered as burdens and families are not so happy when a girl is born. But the case was different at our home. I am lucky to have a husband who loves daughters more.”**

When the skills development center was set up at Haji Chanesar Village, Hurmi helped identify artisans who were most in need of a sustainable livelihood. Later in the project stage, a steering committee was formed for which Hurmi was nominated as Vice President by the unanimous vote of the artisans themselves.

**“After the Community Management Skill Training, the Steering Committee was well equipped with knowledge on how to manage communities and resolve their issues and conflicts. As the Vice President, my role was more influential as many expected me to bring change in the rigid traditions we have been following for years.”**

**“The center brought countless benefits to women and girls in residual and nearby villages. They used to work in the fields in the season of cotton picking. Parents of young girls felt insecure sending their daughters to the fields, as they worked under the scorching sun and the bushes and thorns would tear their clothes or injure them. The center serves as a shadow in their lives. We encouraged the men of our families to send their wives, sisters and daughters to the center without a worry as the environment is safe and secure. Women in our area now work without worrying about traveling long distances while carrying heavy crops on their heads.”**

As a dedicated member of the Steering Committee, Hurmi worked actively for the well-being of her fellow villagers. Recognizing her consistent efforts and dedication, Hurmi was selected as a participant of a ToT for Gender Activists. **“When I joined the Gender Group as an activist, my in-laws and neighbors discouraged me saying such activities for women were not part of our culture and it was not right to let women and girls talk so boldly on sensitive issues. My husband on the other hand, supported me strongly. He motivated me to work as a gender activist and change the mind-sets of the people who did not allow their daughters to grow socially and economically,”** reiterated Hurmi with a confident smile.





**“When I started working as a gender activist, I realized that the people in these rural communities are still living in a backward world, where caste difference was a firm way of life. One of the reasons for some families to not send their daughters to the skills center was the issue of caste difference. They could not allow their daughters to sit with women belonging to a lower caste than them. They also believed that sending their daughters to the skill building center will bring dishonor to their traditions and cultural values,”** narrated Hurmi disappointedly, **“We conducted gender awareness sessions. We also led sessions to individual households to have a direct impact. Girls in our village started to go to school and early childhood marriages started to decrease.”**

**“Recently, a 16-year-old girl was getting married in our village. Our gender activist group visited the household and briefed the family about the problems young girls face in early marriages. When the girl’s in-laws (to be) came to schedule the wedding for February 23rd, the father of the 16-year-old refused instantly. The in-laws were furious to see his reaction. The daughter’s family called us to talk to the in-laws and explain the disadvantages of early childhood marriages to them as well. When the in-laws were also enlightened on the subject, they too understood and postponed the marriage to three years later. It is not just about one change in one house. People have started to think over many rigid traditions followed by us for ages as a result of these awareness sessions.”**

**“There was another instance of a man named Mohan. His wife, Dhai, was very disturbed as Mohan use**

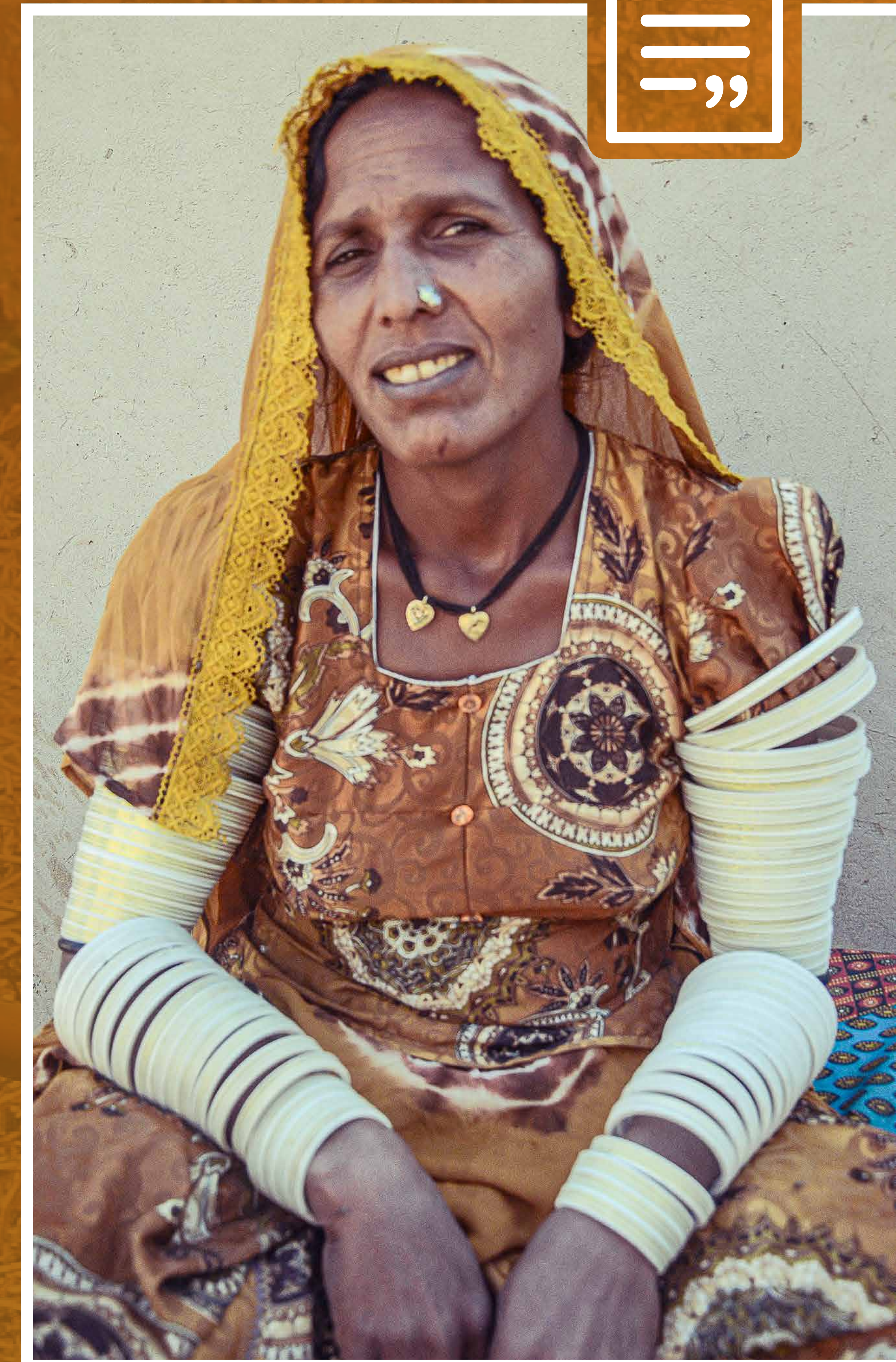
**to drink a lot. He used to waste his earnings on buying alcohol. He did not even spare Dhai’s minimum wage which she earned through stitching and agricultural work. He even hit Dhai when he was drunk.**

**He once hit her with a small axe while he was drunk. He also used to beat his children. We tried to talk to him but he did not listen. So, we went to a doctor to talk about Mohan’s condition. We requested the doctor to scare Mohan by lying to him, stating that his health is weakening. When Mohan fell ill, the doctor came to Mohan and stated that he has cancer. Mohan got so scarred that he stopped consuming alcohol himself. Mohan has not been drinking since three months now. His wife is very relieved as he does not hit her or her children as his mental state has now improved. He does not waste money on drinking now and is more calm and caring towards**

**his family. Yesterday, our steering committee held a meeting with the villagers. At the meeting, Mohan informed us that he has quit smoking as well. His wife is very happy now. Everybody in the village is curious to know how Mohan has changed so much.”**

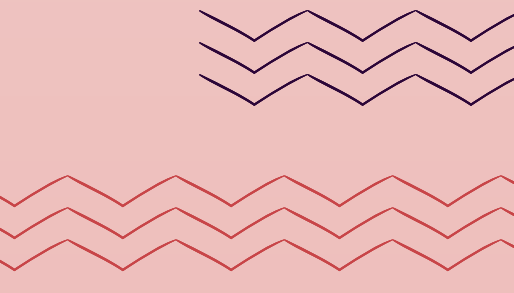
It is important for women to participate proactively for work on gender equality as only women can understand the problems of other women well enough. They will work towards resolving issues in a more realistic and practical manner.

**“Women easily communicate their issues to us. I am happy when I help others to live a better life, especially when daughters are treated well. Now that we have been given a chance to live a better life, we must walk forward together to build a progressive society instead of letting each other down. I wish to see an all girls’ educated and equality based society”.**





# LEARNING & RECOMMENDATIONS



- Invest on community mobilisation through developing various community-based bodies that have helped **strengthen community participation for self-reliance and for sustainability of the artisans and the Taanka model**
- Invest in creating enabling environments by **providing other life-skills such as basic literacy, numeracy, communication and formation of community led structures such as steering committees, gender activists, theatre groups for awareness** as it supports long-term sustainability of social enterprises
- Invest on enhancing artisan skills as per the target market. **Ensure proper market research and provide skill development workshops** based on the learnings and trends highlighted
- **Create an effective, practical and efficient working structure that will work in the long-term** with limited resources and can withstand external changes
- **Set clear goals/vision for the enterprise to stay on track and plan production and marketing phases** that support the wider vision without wastage of time and resources
- **Strategise a clear marketing position** - where you want to stand in the market as that will determine your overall business strategy and structure
- Invest on **developing a business plan before actually launching or starting an enterprise**
- Ensure flexibility in business structure and operation keeping in mind changing contexts and demands - **give sufficient space to make mistakes and learn from them**
- **Always keep a Reserve for product development and marketing** as it is essential for the growth and expansion of any enterprise
- **Keep yourself motivated by looking at the larger picture**, like ensuring poverty reduction, instead of focusing on break-even and profit
- Invest on Innovation and **identify your Unique selling point (USP)** and use that as a foundation of all your product development and marketing plans
- **Work in communities where you already have presence and credibility among communities** instead of venturing new areas
- Financial services in Pakistan need to cater to rural women to help in their economic empowerment and direct access to such facilities





# TAANKA SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE PLANS

## 01

Explore Taanka as a support platform, where it provides service delivery/production/quality assurance and sales, to start-ups and women entrepreneurs in the textile, fashion and handicraft sector. Taanka will provide its intermediary facilitation services and handcrafting production through artisans to emerging women and youth-lead enterprises

## 02

E-commerce – develop a shared digital retail space for Taanka’s own merchandise as well as for other brands and individual entrepreneurs producing through Taanka artisans

## 03

Explore possibilities of expanding to new areas where other projects exist - to be able to benefit larger and diverse communities and ensuring inclusivity of all vulnerable communities



## ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

**B2B** – Business to Business | **B2C** – Business to Consumers | **CWSA** – Community World Service Asia | **GAGs** – Gender Activist Groups | **MBP** – Marketing and Business Plan | **SCs** – Steering Committees | **NOC** – No-Objection Certificate  
**MEAL** – Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning | **SMA**s – Sales and Marketing Agents | **SRH** – Sexual and Reproductive Health | **USP** – Unique Selling Point | **VO** – Village Organizations | **WEGS** – Women Enterprise Groups





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