



Sewing Centre: The picture of a sewing centre in Jagreh Khel, Bamyan, where seven beneficiaries trained in the sewing course are working together and are collaborating as a team for running their business successfully.



Figure 1: Sewing center in Jagreh Khel, Bamyan

Barack Home Décor: This is a picture of home décor items designed out of Barack by the beneficiaries who received training. The decorative items include; wall hangings, fancy coasters, rugs, name-plates etc.



Figure 2: Barack Home Décor

Barack Processing: This picture shows how the beneficiaries are actually weaving Barack during the class. Women are being trained from the stage one of processing to weave to the final stage of designing different items out of the fabric.



Figure 3: Barack Processing

FIVE SMALL BUSINESS CENTRES FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS ARE OPENED IN BAMYAN PROVINCE

EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPD) with support of Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (IADC) provided 220 women entrepreneurs in Bamyan with vocational training in different skills. Three different courses were designed to meet the demands of the local market in Bamyan—tailoring, Barak weaving and beautician course for the women to enable them to participate in the local economic activities. Besides training women in skills required for a beautician, Barak weaving and tailoring, which are the most needed skills in Bamyan, women were also trained in basic literacy, numeracy, management & marketing skills to enable them to run their businesses independently and successfully after completion of the training course.

In the beginning of the project, EPD conducted two assessments— Rapid Market Assessment (RMA) and Training Needs Assessment (TNA), to ensure effective utilization of resources as per the needs of the targeted beneficiaries. Through RMA, Bamyan's market requirements, prospects for women entrepreneurs and required skills to run small-scale businesses & sell the products were studied by the team that selected the training courses and designed the trainings. The Training Needs Assessment (TNA) assisted EPD's program team to understand the potential of targeted women beneficiaries, their capacity and the gap in their skills to be addressed through the training courses. Both the RMA and TNA assessments assisted EPD's program team in choosing the relevant skills for women and design the suitable curriculum for those skills to train women beneficiaries. The training courses for each skill included both theory and practical segments, which were delivered by professional trainers. One hundred and fifty three women beneficiaries received basic and advanced level tailoring training in five classes, thirty three women received hairdressing and beautician training in one class and 34 women attended Barak weaving training. Before EPD organised the Barak weaving course in Bamyan, Barak weaving was common only in Vers district of Bamyan. However, after this course, which had the participants from different districts such as Yakalang, Shibar and centre of Bamyan, now the Barak weaving has been introduced to these districts as well. Earlier, Barak fabric was used to make pants, waistcoats and jackets only, but the beneficiaries of this course have started to design home décor items from Barak fabric, which has good market.

All the beneficiaries, apart from receiving the training on selected skills, also received brief training on literacy, numeracy, hygiene, management, marketing and women's rights trainings in order to equip them with the skills required for the establishment of a small business. The duration of the training for each course was 32 days, which enabled the beneficiaries to learn the skill in a detailed manner.

Following the training courses, EPD established five business centres including two tailoring centres, two beauty parlours and one Barak weaving centre for the beneficiaries. Each centre is run by a management committee whose members are nominated and elected by all members based on a set of criteria agreed among all the members. These centres and their activities are monitored by a monitoring committee and the members of this committee include the officials of the government institutions such as, Department of Women's Affairs, Department of Labour and Social Affairs, CSOs, and EPD's Provincial Coordinator. All the beneficiaries were provided with the toolkits that are required to establish small-scale businesses at the local level- for example, tailoring machines were distributed among the beneficiaries of the tailoring class and the raw material was distributed among the Barak weaving class. As soon as the centres were established and equipped, women started their businesses and began to generate income for themselves and their families. During the close out of the project, a beneficiary named Ms. Sughra resident of Dawodi village of Bamyan, has been recorded saying;

“Before I received this training if I had to go somewhere or do something, I had to ask my husband for money and he would usually refuse to pay. Now through my Barack weaving and production business, I have my own money and that not only covers my personal expenses but I am also able to send my children to school and cover their daily expenses”

EPD supported these centres financially for the first four months and since February 2020, EPD is not providing any kind of financial support to the centres. Fortunately all the centres are operational and financially independent so far. The trained women entrepreneurs have built their customers who purchase their products both in retail and in bulk. While speaking about the success of these centres, a beneficiary, Fatima from Fouladi district, in her conversation with our project team mentioned;

“I remember when I was not contributing financially at home, my in laws would discuss important issues and ignore to include me in any decisions. Now that I have income, they do not make any decision without consulting me. My financial independence, has given me more confidence and respect in my family.”

As of now the centres are becoming famous day by day and are emerging as business hubs for women entrepreneurs who are learning the dynamics of marketing rapidly and are advancing and expanding their businesses accordingly. Besides the beneficiaries of this project, many women from different districts of Bamyan are bringing their products to these centres and are selling them. These centres have created a space for women to explore different economic activities and participate in them based on their skills. Apart from the centre, some of the trained beneficiaries have started their own businesses within their homes or in the small shops within their localities. A beneficiary named

Sharifa mentioned that;

“My husband is a drug addict and has abandoned the family and children. I am the sole breadwinner of the family. Now with the help of the tailoring training that I received, I am able to sew clothes and manage my family expenses by the money I make from sewing.

While the project timeline completed in April 2020 , however due to COVID-19 lockdown, EPD could officially close the project only in August 2020 in a ceremony attended by women, media and civil society in the centre of Bamyan. We hereby, would like to extend our gratitude to Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (IADC) for providing financial support to this timely initiative and thank all staff of EPD whose tireless efforts made this project a success. A special vote of thanks also goes to the officials of the departments of women's and social affairs in Bamyan province, who have supported the initiative consistently.