

Project Saksham



Social Impact Assessment Report August 2022

A Report by:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

India accounts for one of the lowest female workforce participation rates across the world. Domestic responsibilities and carework, lower literacy and skill levels, and patriarchal norms and practices act as some of the major barriers to entering the workforce for women. For women belonging to underserved communities, these barriers are exacerbated. They frequently have limited access to formal education, resulting in limited exposure to technical and soft skills. Furthermore, their household responsibilities restrict their mobility and they are faced with limited opportunities of employment and income generation. To address this challenge, there is a need to upskill women belonging to underserved communities in vocations feasible for them to enhance their knowledge and provide them with a wider array of livelihood opportunities. Project Saksham seeks to empower women belonging to poor socio-economic backgrounds by enhancing their technical skills in tailoring and strengthening their capacity, enabling them to seek more income-generating opportunities.

Project Saksham's advanced tailoring program has a two-pronged approach- it imparts technical knowledge of tailoring and stitching while simultaneously conducting capacity building workshops to enhance the entrepreneurial skills of program participants. Project Saksham imparts training across its three centres in Mumbai, namely, Jogeshwari, Andheri (Mahakali) and Vashi. The technical training module covers theoretical as well as practical sessions on a range of topics such as usage of sewing machines, types of stitches, measurement, quality control and creation of products such as bags, blouses, shirts and dresses. Additionally, the capacity building workshops cover aspects of goal-setting, financial literacy and entrepreneurship. Project Saksham also offers program participants the opportunity to continue working at the training centre post-training as artisans, assisting in the completion of orders from garment manufacturers.

This assessment aims to analyse the impact of Project Saksham on the lives of target women through the level of skills they have been able to adopt, the employment opportunities they have been able to avail, and the change in living standard achieved as a result of the training sessions attended under the program. To understand the program's impact, a sample of program participants, trainers, and program team members from Project Saksham across the three centres were surveyed.

It was observed that the respondents witnessed an increase in their skill level pertaining to tailoring and regularly adopted their learnings from the training sessions into their everyday tailoring work.

A majority of the program participants surveyed have gained meaningful employment post-training and over 76 percent have recorded an increase in their income levels. This resulted in their increased contribution to household income and decision-making, alongside increased recognition and respect within the community. Over 88 percent of the respondents reported an increase in their confidence level, 63 percent reported increased financial independence, and nearly 60 percent reported an increase in their entrepreneurial knowledge, soft skills and professional etiquette through the capacity building sessions. They also indicated an increase in their quality of work and their client management abilities, resulting in an increased clientele.

The study demonstrates that the program has been largely successful in improving the stitching and tailoring skills and strengthening capacity of women belonging to underserved communities to engage in meaningful work and achieve financial independence.



INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

The economic growth and development of any country depends on a lot of factors, some external and some internal. One such factor, which is extremely crucial, is the quality of the workforce in that country apart from the skill levels of the workforce. Closely related to these variables is the female labour force participation rate. This refers to the number of women in a country who are a part of the labour force, calculated as a percentage of the country's total labour force. Such female labour force participation goes beyond contributing to the country's economic growth. Women who are a part of the labour force tend to have greater financial independence and agency when it comes to taking decisions in their households as opposed to those who are not a part of the workforce. However, the female labour force participation in India was only at 25.1 percent between July 2020 to June 2021.¹ This low participation rate is a result of numerous reasons.

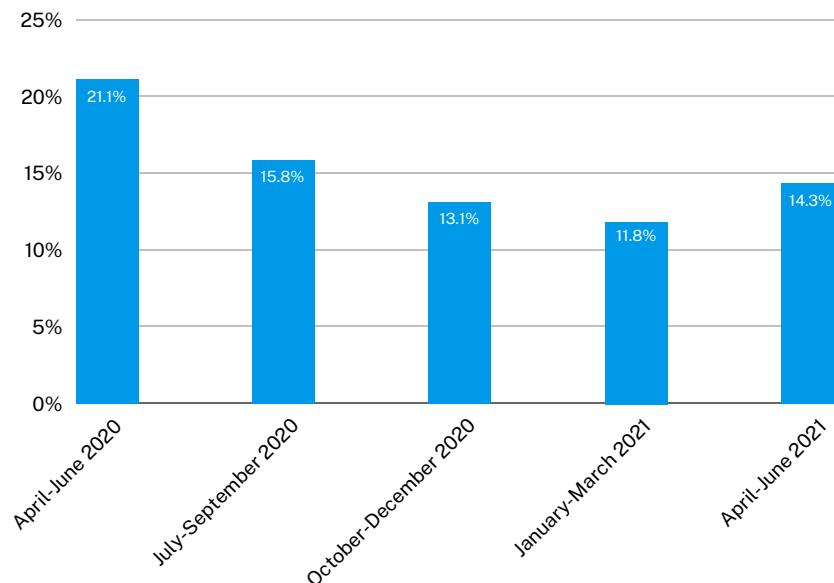
Social norms dictating the relegation of women to the household and not being allowed to venture outside for work continue to be upheld in a lot of communities. This is exacerbated by the fact that in order to be employed in skilled or productive work, adequate and/or appropriate educational qualifications are mandatory which poses additional challenges for women. While various governmental and societal efforts over the past few years have led to a maximisation of enrollment of girls in schools at the primary level, higher secondary levels see a lot of female dropouts. This has resulted in a decline in the rate of completion of secondary education amongst girls from 81.1 percent in 2014-15 to 65.8 percent in 2016-17. This enrollment rate further drops when it comes to rural areas in the country.²

Other factors contributing to low female labour force participation rates include unpaid care work that is largely taken on by women, caste-based discrimination, wage gap, and gender norms. The COVID-19 pandemic further pushed some women to unemployment, as they were burdened with additional care responsibilities at home which required their immediate attention. All these factors together resulted in the unemployment rate of women between April 2021 to June 2021 being recorded at 14.3 percent, according to the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation.

1. Periodic Labour Force Survey – Annual Report (July, 2020 – June, 2021), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

2. Raj, A., & Bhanot, N. Tracing Decline of Female Labour Force Participation Rate to Caste Inequalities in Urban and Rural India. *International Journal of Policy Sciences and Law*, 1(3).

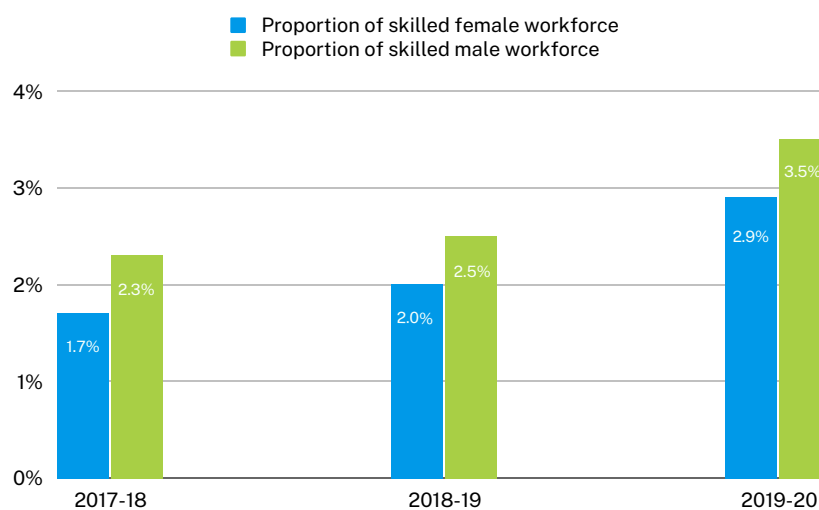
Unemployment Rate of Women



(Source: PLFS 2020- 21, Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation)

While the low female labour force participation rate in India is concerning by itself, the disparity in the distribution of skilled labour force is not any different. Skilled workers (or skilled labour) are those who have special skills, training or knowledge which they are able to apply to their work. Such skilled labourers are able to take up better job opportunities requiring certain skill sets which leads to better economic opportunities and greater financial independence as well. The proportion of skilled female workforce in India, however, was only at 2.9 percent in 2019-20 as compared to 3.5 percent of men.³

Distribution of Skilled Labour force in India



(Source: PLFS, Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation)

3. Periodic Labour Force Survey, Annual Reports (2017-2020) Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

Employment Obstacles for Women in Mumbai's Slums

Apart from the slew of challenges faced by women while attempting to enter the workforce, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds face additional hurdles, including women who live in slum areas of any city. The city of Mumbai is said to have the largest slum population of any city in the world, with an estimated 55 percent of the city's population living in various slums.⁴ Such slums present a myriad of unique issues ranging from lack of housing and other basic facilities to dire poverty and poor living conditions. Adding to these issues is the inefficient availability of microcredit to the people living there, pushing them to resort to loan sharks who charge exorbitant rates of interest which most of them cannot afford. All of these become additional hurdles of huge magnitude for women who would like to be a part of the labour force and earn their own incomes.

Earning their own incomes would be particularly helpful for their families as about 40 percent of the population in Mumbai's slums lives below the poverty line⁵ However, the challenges that these women face restrict their mobility and in turn, their avenues and opportunities for employment. This was exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic and the national lockdown in the year 2020, which highlighted the importance of providing these women with avenues for work either from the comfort of their houses or within close proximity such that they had no need to travel long distances to take up work. Furthermore, about 30 percent of the women in Mumbai have not attended at least 10 years of school⁶ which means that any solution to absorb them into the workforce with a view to enable them to become earners should take into account their education and skill levels as well.

In order to improve the overall low rates of skilled labour force in the country and to tap into such potential for further economic development, the Government of India has been focusing on skill development and vocational training for women. This led to the setting up of National Skill Training Institutes where women were trained in diverse areas including but not limited to fashion designing, computers, office management, sewing, and embroidery under the Craftsmen Training Schemes and Craft Instructors Training Scheme.⁷ This initiative by the Government is likely to also take advantage of the scope of the textile and apparel industry in India which is the second largest employer in the country, providing direct employment to 45 million people. Reports also suggest that the exports of India's textiles and apparels is expected to reach 100 billion USD (US Dollars) in the next 5 years.⁸ This shows that if women are provided with adequate skill training that can be employed for textile and apparel work, their employment rates are likely to be higher while also providing them with additional fringe benefits.

4. Deshmukh, M. (2013). Conditions of slum population of major sub-urban wards of Mumbai in Maharashtra. *Voice of Research*, 2 (2).

5. Jha, M. (2022). Pandemic Precarity and the complicated case of Maharashtra. United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research.

6. National Family Health Survey 2019-20, Mumbai data

7. Vocational Training Programme for Women, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India

8. Invest India, Government of India Report on Textiles and Apparel sector

Keeping in mind all these factors and with a clear objective of upgrading the skills and livelihood potential of women living in Mumbai's slums particularly, ACT (Animedh Charitable Trust) along with IDFC FIRST Bank started **Project Saksham**. This project focused on systematic tailoring internships for the women in a "learn and earn" format. The livelihood that Project Saksham narrowed down on was decided keeping in mind the educational qualifications of the target women, in such a way that it did not become an impediment to earning their own incomes. The project was formulated to overcome and address the limitations of women living in Mumbai's slums, while ensuring a sustainable and self-sufficient method of employment to enable the women to continue working and earning an income. By equipping the women with intensive vocational skills related to tailoring and enabling them to generate their own incomes, the project worked towards United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 8 which deals with decent work and economic growth. Thus, Project Saksham aimed at enabling the women to overcome their challenges of limited educational qualifications, lack of mobility, and lack of financial independence by providing them with vocational training in such a way that they would be able to either work from their own houses or in their neighbourhoods while generating income.



PROGRAM CARDINALS

About the project

Project Saksham was initiated through a partnership between IDFC FIRST Bank and its implementation partner, Animedh Charitable Trust, with the aim of providing vocational training to women belonging to underserved communities, empowering them to become financially independent. The project adopted two main approaches towards fulfilment of this objective - through provision of training on advanced tailoring and by conducting capacity building workshops to encourage entrepreneurship. As part of its training modules on tailoring and stitching, Project Saksham covered a wide spectrum of topics ranging from basics of using a sewing machine to types of stitches and measurements and identifying defects to pattern making, sewing, and creating different products. As part of its capacity building workshops, the program delved into topics ranging from financial literacy to goal setting to facets of entrepreneurship and client management, among others, directed towards fostering agency of the program participants. Project Saksham commenced in 2016 and has completed five years of operation across three tailoring training centres in Mumbai, Maharashtra. Through these training centres, Project Saksham aims to provide continued support to the program participants in skill enhancement and widening their avenues for livelihood generation.

Objectives

Project Saksham envisions to enhance tailoring skills and livelihood potential of women belonging to underserved communities through a systemic 'earn and learn' format to achieve the following objectives

1

To upskill women by providing them comprehensive tailoring and stitching training, aimed at enhancing their livelihood opportunities and facilitating income generation.

2

To ensure a sustained behavioural change in women, through the capacity building sessions aimed at instilling confidence, improving financial literacy, encouraging entrepreneurship, among others.

3

To foster agency of women and empower them to be changemakers in their communities.

TIMELINE

2016 • • • • • 2022

GEOGRAPHICAL OUTREACH

Centre	Total number of program participants enrolled
Jogeshwari	460
Mahakali	451
Vashi	216





MODALITIES OF THE PROGRAM

GOAL:

To enhance income-generating livelihood opportunities for women belonging to underserved communities through vocational skill development of stitching and tailoring, leading to their empowerment in the community.

ACTIVITIES

- Identifying and mobilising women with limited opportunities from the community (unskilled as well as semi-skilled tailors)
- Conducting theoretical and practical tailoring training sessions
- Conducting motivational sessions and capacity building workshops on improving entrepreneurial skills such as financial literacy and soft skills
- Post-training support in the form of providing training completion certificates, employment opportunities at the training centres and customer leads

OUTCOMES

- Enhanced technical knowledge around tailoring (cutting, stitching, layering etc.) and creating different kinds of products
- Regular adoption of skills learnt in day-to-day tailoring work
- Improved tailoring skills resulting in improved quality of stitching and final work products
- Increase in the percentage of women who operate as entrepreneurs
- Increased financial literacy resulting in increased savings
- Increased understanding of customer expectations and requirements
- Increase in credibility of tailors due to certification of skills
- Increased market linkages for tailors

IMPACT

- Increase in income and overall standard of living of tailors
- Increase in customer satisfaction
- Increased clientele base/ network of customers
- Increased participation in decision-making at household/ community level
- Increased confidence/ personal growth of trainees
- Increased clientele base/ network of customers

STAKEHOLDERS

- Unskilled and Semi-Skilled tailors
- Trainers
- Expert speakers,
- Project Saksham team
- Garment Manufacturing companies

SDGs impacted



Target 8.3: Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalisation and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services

Target 8.5: By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value



ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

Due to limited attainment of formal education, women belonging to underserved backgrounds have limited employment and livelihood opportunities available to them. Furthermore, their domestic responsibilities restrict their mobility, limiting their earning opportunities. This hinders the overall empowerment and agency of women. The broad themes undertaken by Project Saksham to address these challenges and to upskill women to facilitate their livelihood generation are detailed below.

Mobilising women unskilled and semi-skilled in tailoring

Project Saksham centres are established after conducting an assessment of the surrounding community and its requirements. Once the need to set up a training centre within an underserved locality is identified, the next step is mobilisation of program participants. The program participants are broadly mobilised through four broad channels, the bulk of the mobilisation relying on word-of-mouth. The four primary channels of mobilisation that the program team relies on are described below.

1

The Project Saksham team conducts community outreach initiatives by visiting nearby schools and encouraging mothers of school students to enrol in the program.

2

A large number of program participants recommend the training program to their peers and encourage them to participate.

3

Door-to-door publicity is conducted within the vicinity of the training centre to encourage eligible women to come forward and enrol themselves.

4

The Project Saksham team establishes connections with other nonprofit organisations to increase awareness about the training program and its offerings and facilitate enrolment of women belonging to underserved communities in the surrounding locality.

Design of Training Approach and Curriculum

Project Saksham delivers training in the offline as well as online mode. The offline training is conducted in the training centres established in localities with communities identified as underserved, while the online training is accessible to all interested participants and is not geographically restricted. While the online training model was adopted during COVID-19, to ensure uninterrupted learning for all program participants, it was continued to ensure access to learning for all interested candidates. The training centres are well-equipped with sewing machines, chairs, and all the tools and accessories needed for the practical sessions. For example, the centres are equipped with stitching equipment, accessories, and sample materials for practical sessions and demonstrations. The online classes are conducted via video calls for all program participants who have sewing machines at home to allow them to practise independently.

A) Design of tailoring training approach and curriculum:

The curriculum of Project Saksham has been designed considering not only the background of the program participants and their specific needs, but also the requirements and demands of the industry at large. The training modules are designed considering the educational and social background of the program participants and their existing skill level. The program enhances tailoring and stitching skills of the program participants by first acquainting them with basic concepts such as usage of sewing machines, types of stitches, measurement and identification of defects. Further, the training module progresses to impart theoretical and practical training on pattern-making and sewing of products such as eco-veggie bags, dresses, cushion covers, kurtis and gown sets. The pattern-making and sewing module of these products covers drafting and cutting of the fabric, layering, ironing and finishing. The training module concludes with practical assessments being conducted for a variety of products such as blouses, shirts, reusable bags etc.

The training modules and syllabus for Project Saksham have been curated aligned to the requirements of the garment manufacturing partners of Project Saksham to match the demands of the industry. The modules have been designed in collaboration with garment manufacturing partners, Project Saksham's team, the design mentor, and the trainers.

Some of the modules covered under the technical training include:

- Operating the sewing machine and the overlock machine
- Commonly arising sewing machine problems and their solutions
- The roles and responsibilities of a tailor
- Types of stitches- running, hemming, back stitch, basting stitch and tacking
- Understanding the size chart and taking measurements
- Fabric care
- Drafting and cutting of fabric to create products such as bags, cushion covers, kurtis etc.

B) Design of capacity building workshops:

Women belonging to underserved communities face socio-economic barriers that hinder their exposure and access to opportunities of higher education, employment, managing finances, development of soft skills or avenues to launch themselves into diverse livelihood generation opportunities. To address this challenge, Project Saksham adopts a comprehensive approach of not only providing technical training on tailoring and stitching but also providing capacity strengthening support to the program participants through workshops conducted by experts.

The capacity building workshops were conducted at least once a month, across all batches since the inception of Project Saksham in 2016. The workshops largely focused on three major areas:

1 Goal-Setting:

Individuals from underserved communities rarely receive the opportunity to define their aspirations and set personal and professional goals in life. Their socio-economic conditions inhibit their dreams for the future. For women belonging to underserved communities, the opportunity of setting aspirational goals is even lower. To bring about a change in this mindset and to enable women to define their future, Project Saksham invites notable alumni and industry experts to share their journey and inspire and motivate the women to set personal and professional goals for themselves and their families.

2 Financial Literacy:

Since the program participants have had limited exposure to formal education and financial management, Project Saksham conducts workshops to instil various aspects of financial planning among program participants such as the importance of saving and investing, establishing financial goals, inculcating responsible spending habits, as well as understanding product pricing, sales and risks involved.

3 Entrepreneurial Skills:

In the absence of aspirations, lack of exposure to formal education, and the necessary technical knowledge and soft skills, not only are program participants faced with a limited range of income generating opportunities, but they are less likely to be self-employed as well. To bridge this gap and enable program participants to create employment opportunities for themselves, the capacity building workshops also impart training on enhancing entrepreneurial skills of women as tailors, enabling them to take on stitching orders on their own. The workshops on entrepreneurship highlight the importance of entrepreneurial skills such as innovative thinking, business mindset, consistency, hard work and visionary thinking. As part of the entrepreneurship workshop, notable alumni and entrepreneurs are invited to speak about their experiences and encourage program participants to embark on the journey of entrepreneurship.

As the garment manufacturing industry relies heavily on customer satisfaction and quality control, it becomes necessary to impart soft skills training to the program participants. In addition to the above workshop modules, workshops are also conducted on dress designing, trend tracking, acquiring new business, client management and enhancing professional etiquette to enhance soft skills and strengthen capacity of program participants in a holistic manner, in addition to their technical knowledge of tailoring.

Conducting Training sessions

The program team has devised a standardised approach to delivering technical training as well as building capacities for all the batches. A typical day of training consists of two hours of theoretical training on a particular module followed by two hours of practical training, wherein program participants put into practice all that they have learnt. During the practical training, program participants work on creating products aligned to current client orders and receive a wage for each product they create. This is Project Saksham's 'learn and earn' model, where the program participants are able to generate income through the initial phase of their learning itself.

The attendance of all trainees is also tracked for every batch. Every trainee is required to maintain at least 75 percent attendance in order to obtain their certification demonstrating completion of training.



During COVID-19, an online training model was adopted when the training centres were shut. Theoretical training was imparted via video call and the program participants were sent detailed videos and learning modules over WhatsApp to assist them with their learning. To cover the practical aspect of the training module, the program participants were required to practice stitching on their own and report their progress to the trainer.

Post Training Support

Project Saksham continues to offer post-training support to its program participants in the form of certification, employment opportunities, continued doubt-solving and guidance.

Certificates: Upon completion of the 3 month training course and having fulfilled the criteria of minimum attendance and passing of assessment tests, the program participants receive a certificate recognising the skills gained.

Employment at centres: Since its inception, Project Saksham has been offering employment opportunities to program participants across all batches. Upon successful completion of the training program, the program participants are offered the option of working at the Saksham centre itself and catering to orders received from the garment manufacturing partners. The program participants can render their services collectively to complete the client orders and receive a wage above the market wage on the basis of wage per product created.



Innovations within the program

Karma First

Karma First is a unique initiative designed with IDFC FIRST Bank. It is a revolving credit scheme available to Project Saksham program participants where an IDFC FIRST Bank customer can pledge a part of their interest earned to support beneficiaries across various interventions who require financial assistance. Under Karma First, 50 percent of the total amount required by program participants is given as a low-interest loan, the repayment of which starts only after 3 months of encashment. The contributions are also used to provide basic Career Launch Kits worth Rs. 500 that include raw supplies like threads, scissors, bobbins, tack pins, etc., and seed funds of Rs. 5000 to assist Saksham graduates start tailoring activities and embark on the journey of entrepreneurship.

Formation of Women Self-Help Groups

Project Saksham has catalysed change within the program participants by providing them with an impetus to tap into their collective resources and organise themselves into self-help groups. These self-help groups have provided financial support to members, by helping them purchase sewing machines and other resources that they require while taking on orders on their own. The SHGs have also proven to be strong support systems, with members offering professional advice and guidance to each other.



PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

This report presents the results of the evaluation of Animedh Charitable Trust's Project Saksham for the period of 2016 to 2021. The Assessor agency, Social Lens Consulting, was brought on board to assess the outcomes and impact of the program from a third-party perspective.

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

- To determine the contextual background of the project and the extent to which the objectives of the tailoring program were consistent with the beneficiaries' needs, accounting for the socio-economic challenges faced by the target beneficiaries
- To examine the role of project structure, nature of delivery, etc. in the achievement of the programme goals, outputs and outcomes
- To understand the impact delivered through direct beneficiaries (women trainees) as well as other stakeholders (family members, program managers, field team members, etc.)

Research Methodology

Primary and Secondary Research

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach involving the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. The analysis has been drawn from primary and secondary research. The research methodology is presented below.

A careful examination of the program literature was undertaken to understand the organisation's objectives and methodologies used. This was used in the design of the assessment tools and indicators and to develop a basis for evaluating any gaps and challenges faced. A review of reports published by the government (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, etc.) social enterprises, and independent studies was conducted to establish the project's relevance with respect to the needs of the women from underserved communities.

A multi-stakeholder approach was adopted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact. Through participatory research, qualitative and quantitative data from tailors, family members, garment manufacturing companies, and the project management team was collected and analysed. Contextualised tools were designed for each stakeholder in alignment with their engagement with the program. The primary research involved:

- **Online and on-field surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs) with a sample of beneficiaries (women trainees / tailors) directly involved in the intervention**
- **Online and on-field surveys interviews with the program field level staff and management team and other stakeholders**

Sample selection

A random sample of study participants was selected for this assessment through the multi-stage cluster sampling approach.⁹ The sample size for the primary program participants was determined through a sample size calculator that is based on:

- **Sampling Confidence Level of 95 percent: A percentage that reveals how confident one can be that the population would select an answer within a specific range**
- **Margin of Error of 10 percent: A percentage that indicates how much one can expect one's survey results to reflect the views of the overall population. The smaller the margin of error, the closer one is to having the exact answer at a given confidence level.**

Over the course of three days, three locations were visited:

Location	Date of Visit
Jogeshwari	19th July 2022
Vashi	20th July 2022
Andheri	22nd July 2022

9. In the multi-stage cluster sampling approach, the population is divided into groups or 'clusters' and individual units are then randomly selected from within the cluster to be used under the sample.

Beneficiary Type	Population	Planned Sample	Actual Sample Covered
Tailors / Trainees	1110	90	122 • Jogeshwari: 33 • Vashi: 46 • Andheri (Mahakali): 32 • Telephonic: 11
Trainers	4	3 (1 per centre visited)	3
Garment Manufacturing Companies	3	-	2
Program team members	3	2	2

The research was carried out through language compatible assessment tools deployed by trained field researchers. The field team was recruited and trained to conduct data collection with respect to expected outcomes, prepared for contingencies, and trained to follow best practices for data collection and ethical standards.

Data Analysis

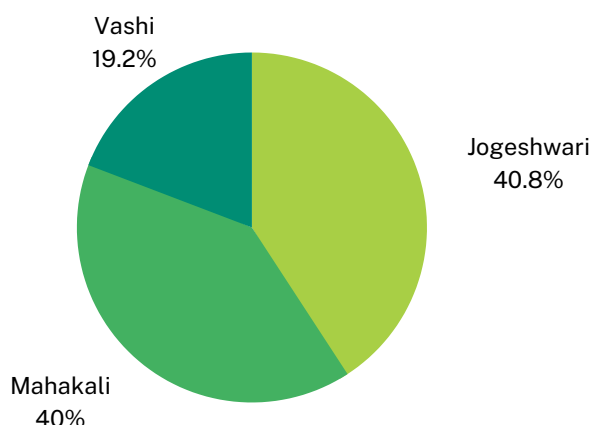
The data was cleaned and checked for outliers, abnormal data entries or missing data using MS Excel. Qualitative and quantitative data were separated. A descriptive analysis was conducted across primary and secondary information and correlations between identified variables was carried out as appropriate. An inductive approach was used to analyse qualitative data by looking for relationships between the variables across individuals' characteristics.

RESULTS

Program Outputs

Across the period of 2016-2022, three training centres of Project Saksham were established in Jogeshwari, Andheri (Mahakali) and Vashi. Over the 5 years, a total of 1,127 program participants were enrolled in Project Saksham across all locations.

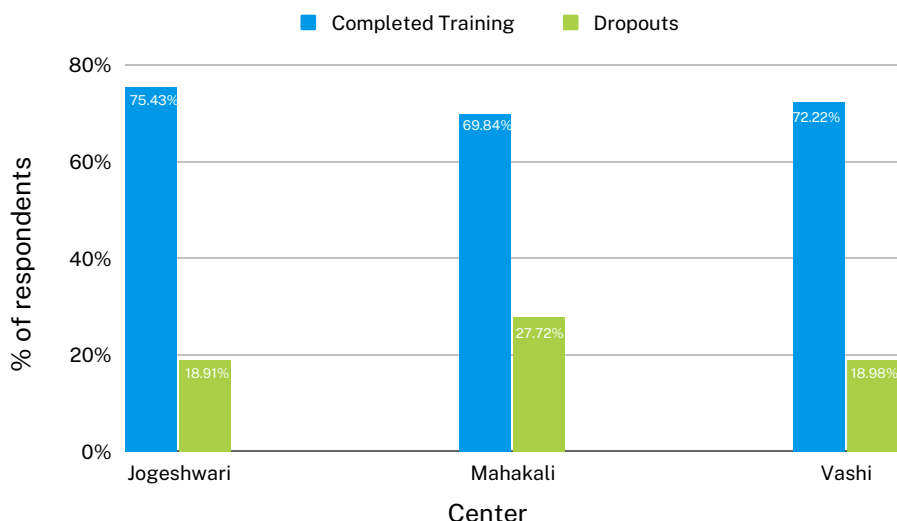
Distribution of participants across training centers



The Jogeshwari training centre, which was the first centre which was established under Project Saksham in 2016, had the highest enrolment of participants. Out of the total number of participants enrolled, the Jogeshwari centre also had the highest percentage of participants who completed training.

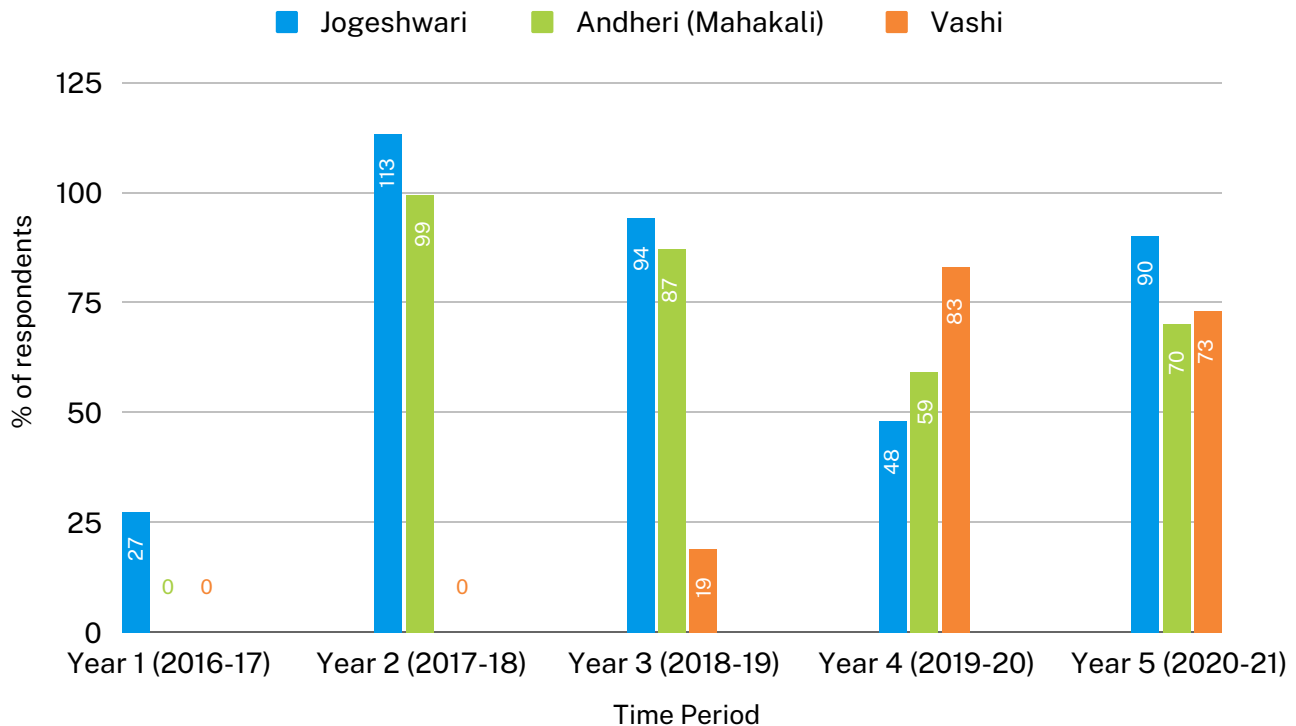
While the reasons for dropping out of the program differed across respondents, some of the recurring reasons for drop out were health issues, family commitments, and reverse migration to their villages.

Distribution of program participants



The distribution of program participants who completed the training over the period 2016 - 2021 across the different centres is presented below.

Centre-wise distribution of participants who completed training



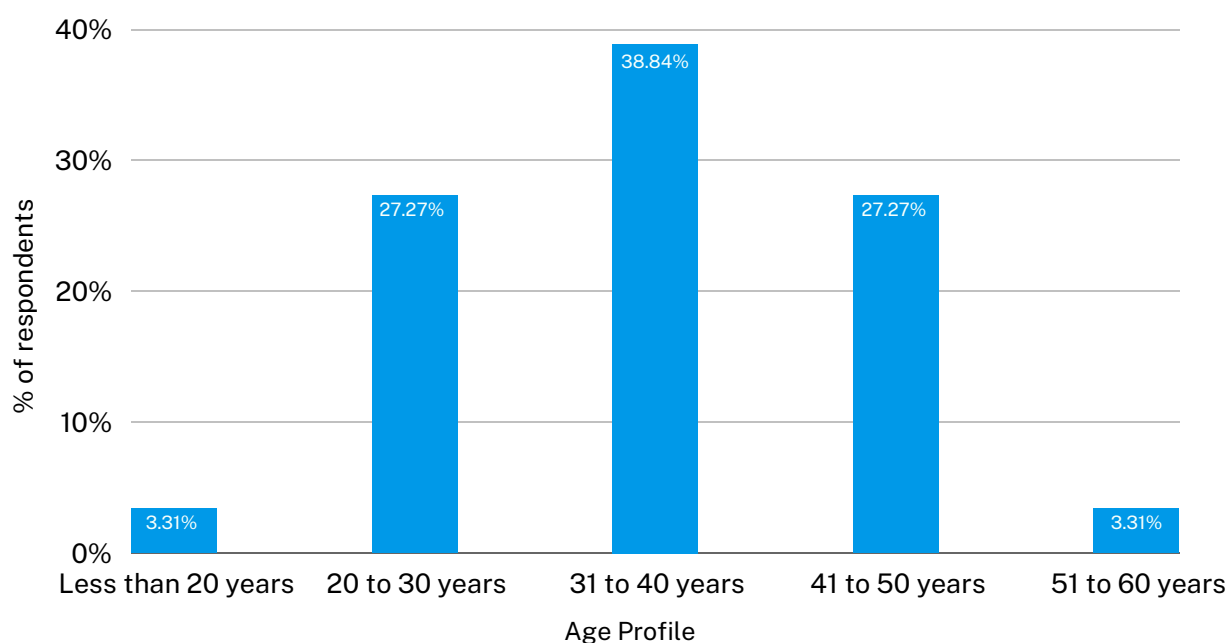
Program Outcomes and Impact

An independent assessment conducted through surveys and interviews with a selected sample of direct and indirect beneficiaries from a sample of locations visited in July 2022 reflected the below-mentioned results.

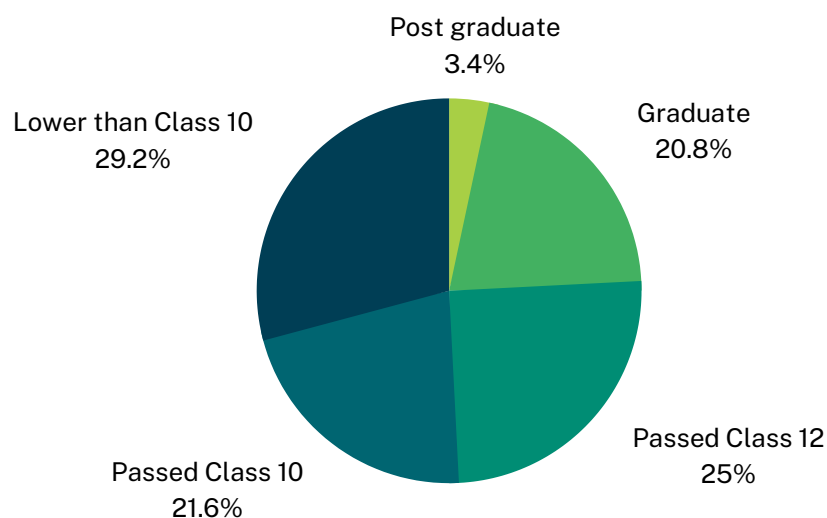
Need for training

The interviews conducted with the respondents indicated that a majority of them were middle-aged, belonging to the 31-40 years age group. A majority of the respondents were school dropouts, with 28.7 percent having attained education below Grade 10. While 20.5 percent of the respondents were graduates, a majority of them indicated that since they had attained their college degrees from lesser recognized colleges in villages and rural areas, the degree held little value in Mumbai and did not help them in acquiring employment and livelihood avenues in the city.

Age profile of Respondents

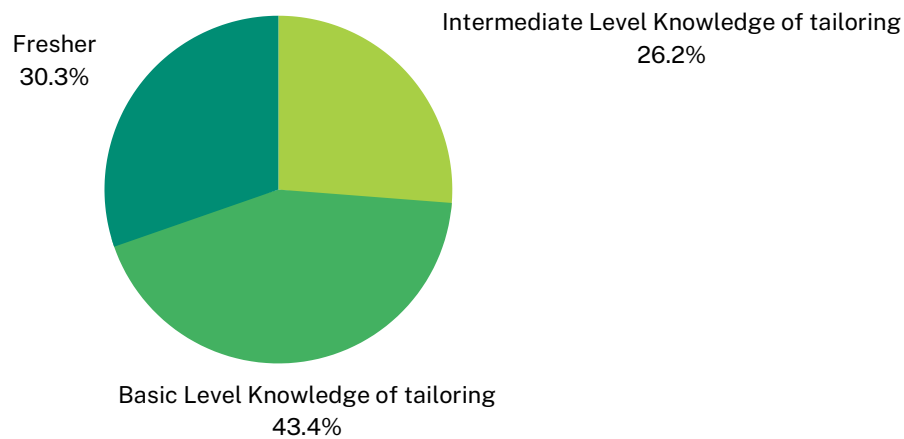


Educational Qualification of Respondents



Our interviews with the respondents revealed that prior to attending the training program, around 74 percent of the respondents had no knowledge or some basic level knowledge of tailoring, implying that they could do basic stitching such as sewing of buttons and mending of torn clothes. Only 26.2 percent of the respondents stated that they had intermediate level knowledge of tailoring, stating that they could alter clothes and stitch basic clothing items and accessories. The respondents' prior level of knowledge pertaining to tailoring indicates the need for an advanced tailoring training course to enhance their existing tailoring skills and upskill them.

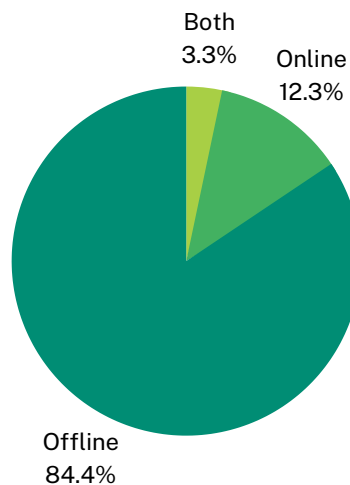
Respondents' knowledge of tailoring (pre-training)



Trainings

A majority of the respondents (around 84 percent) reported receiving training at the centre, while 12.3 percent reported receiving training online. 3.3 percent of the respondents were a part of the hybrid batch that started off with receiving offline training at the centre for a few days but soon transitioned to the online mode when COVID-19 related mobility restrictions were introduced.

Type of training imparted



The training covered technical modules as well as capacity building workshops. The technical training consisted of 2 hours of theoretical learning followed by 2 hours of practical sessions. The same teaching methodology was adopted during online classes as well. However, the duration of the online classes differed, considering the network and internet bandwidth challenges being faced by a few program participants.

A high majority (98.3 percent) of the respondents recalled cutting, stitching and creation of specific products such as cushion covers, bags and kurtis as the major modules covered during the tailoring training.

Furthermore, 71.3 percent of the respondents recalled capacity building workshops being conducted on financial literacy with emphasis on inculcating responsible saving and spending habits, the need for insurance coverage, understanding of risk, managing sales and pricing of products etc.

Additionally, 62.3 percent of the respondents recalled attending motivational sessions being conducted by experienced entrepreneurs and industry experts, contributing a significant amount of their boost in confidence and independence to these sessions. Over 45 percent of the respondents recalled workshops being conducted on acquiring new business and honing the skills required for entrepreneurship.

Modules Covered (Capacity Building)	Percent of respondents who recalled attending the sessions
Motivational Sessions by Experienced Entrepreneurs	62.30
Financial Literacy	71.31
Goal setting	36.89
Dress designing & trend setting	40.16
Acquiring new business/ clients	45.90
Skills required for entrepreneurship	45.90
Soft Skills and Professional etiquette	13.93
Others	25.41

96.7 percent of the respondents stated that they had completed the entire training conducted across 3 months. Only 3.3 percent of the respondents stated that they were unable to complete the entire training due to varying reasons such as having to go back to their villages during the lockdown or being forced to take on household work due to monetary constraints in the household.

Certification

75.4 percent of the respondents received certificates upon completion of training while 24.6 percent of them were yet to receive their certificates. Our interviews highlighted that most respondents who were yet to receive their certificates had completed their training in the most recent batch and their graduation ceremony was yet to be held.

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A program participant from Vashi states:

“The certification provided by Project Saksham helped me bring on board more customers and set up my own business. Being certified helped me convince potential customers about my skills and knowledge pertaining to training”

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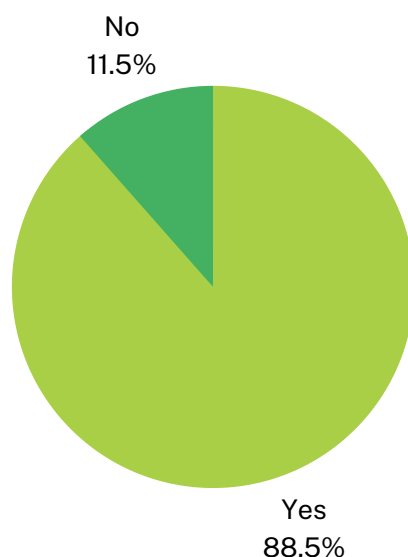


Employment

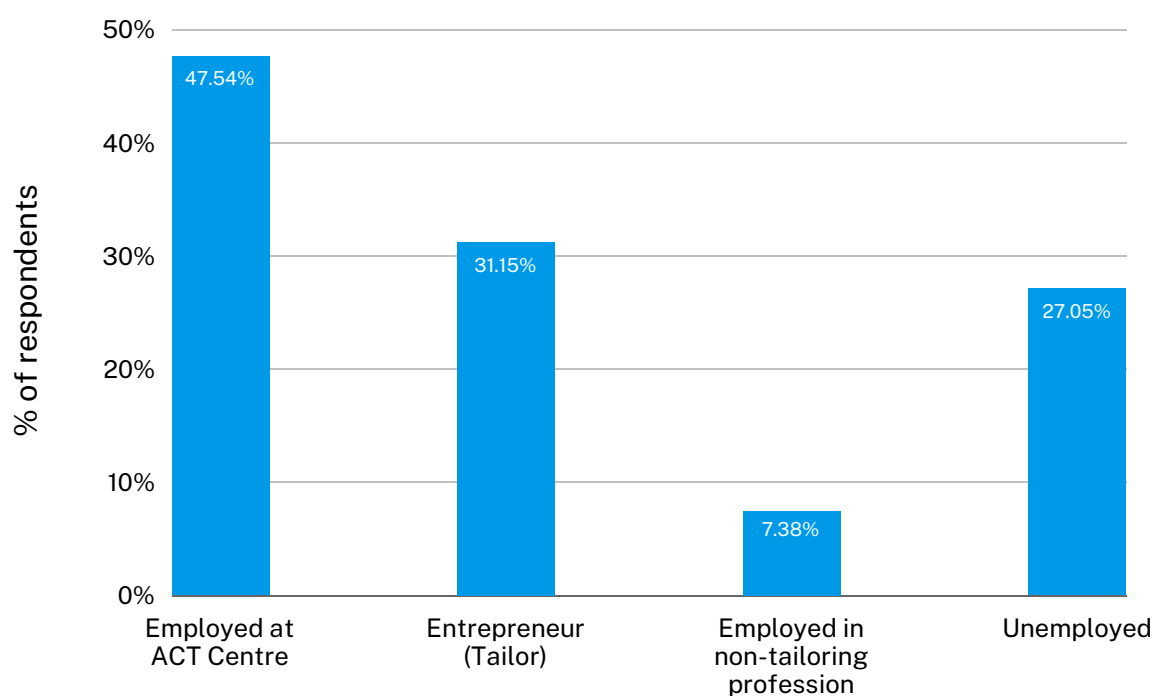
Upon completion of training, **63.9 percent** of the respondents reported that they had received employment support by Project Saksham through the **opportunity of gaining employment at the training centres**. While some could not join due to household responsibilities and mobility restrictions, nearly 47.5 percent of the respondents stated that they had the opportunity to join ACT training centres as artisans. Furthermore, 31.15 percent of the respondents had embarked on the journey of entrepreneurship and took on orders on their own from home. **Nearly 88.5 percent of the respondents reported that they owned a sewing machine of their own and either took on client orders for stitching or stitched clothes for themselves, their friends and family members.**

27 percent of the respondents who reported being currently unemployed post-training, stated multiple reasons for their employment, some of which were- domestic responsibilities and carework, time constraints, ill-health, lack of a sewing machine at home to practice stitching, among others.

Sewing machine at home



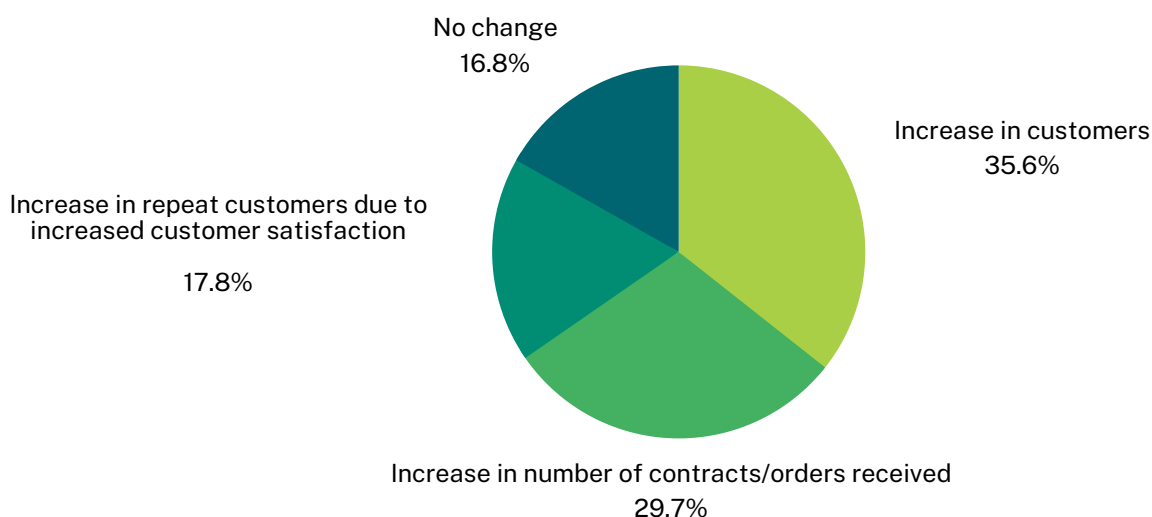
Employment Status



Changes witnessed in the program participants post-training

Out of the 31.15 percent of the respondents who were operating as entrepreneur tailors, 35.6 percent reported an increase in their clientele as a result of the training. Around **30 percent of the respondents stated that post-training, due to an increase in their technical knowledge pertaining to tailoring, efficiency and increased work quality, they witnessed an increase in the number of contracts and stitching orders they received.** 17.8 percent of the respondents also witnessed an increase in repeat customers due to increased customer satisfaction, attributing this partly to the technical training obtained in the tailoring program and partly to the soft skills of customer management and professional etiquette learnt during the capacity building sessions.

Change in clientele and contracts post-training (for self-employed)



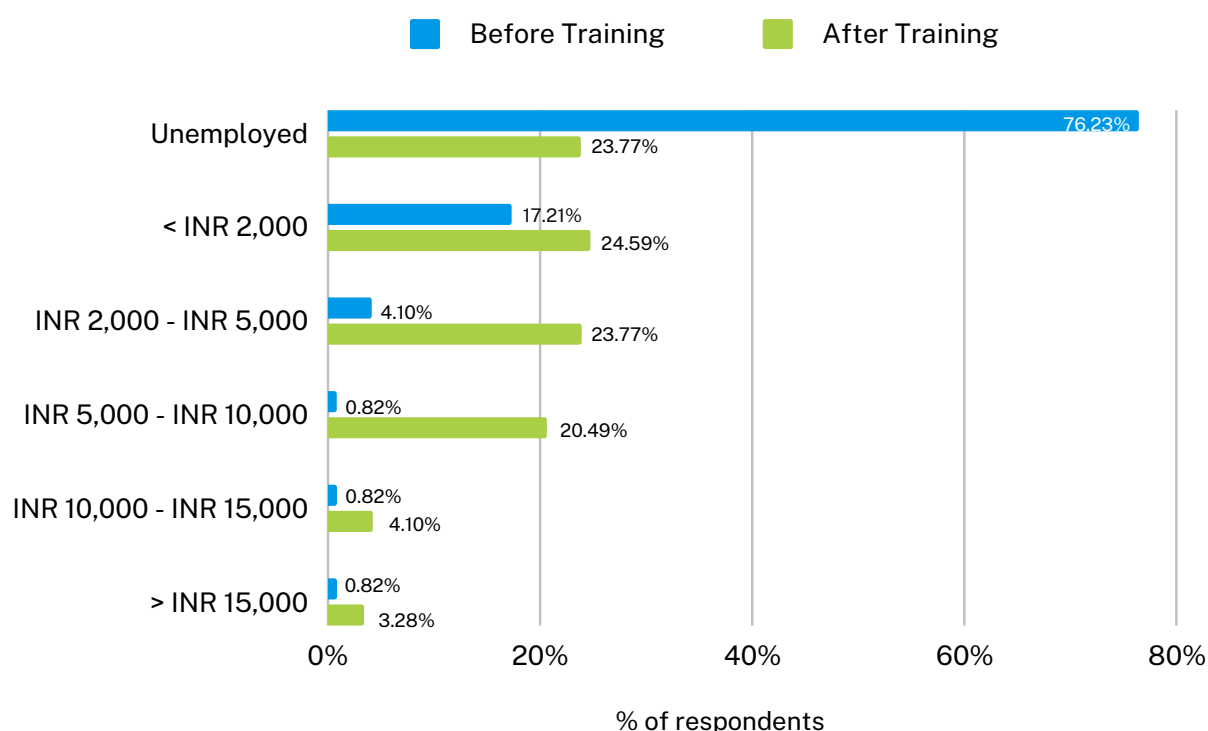
Income

The most evident change witnessed post-training was the increase in employment and income levels among the respondents. There was a decrease in the percentage of women unemployed from before training to after training by a drastic 52.4 percent. Furthermore, over 23 percent of the respondents now earned within the income bracket of INR 2,000 to INR 5,000 per month, an increase from a mere 4.1 percent of respondents pre-training.

The highest change in income before and after training was witnessed among respondents earning within the income bracket of INR 5,000 to INR 10,000 - from a mere 0.82 percent of women belonging to this income bracket before training to a multifold increase to 20.4 percent of women earning within this range after training.

The respondents have reported an increase in their confidence levels and a stronger self-image due to the increased financial independence attained through Project Saksham. Additionally, respondents reported feeling a great sense of accomplishment and pride, being able to contribute to their family's increased income and their children's present and future needs in terms of education and providing them with a higher standard of living.

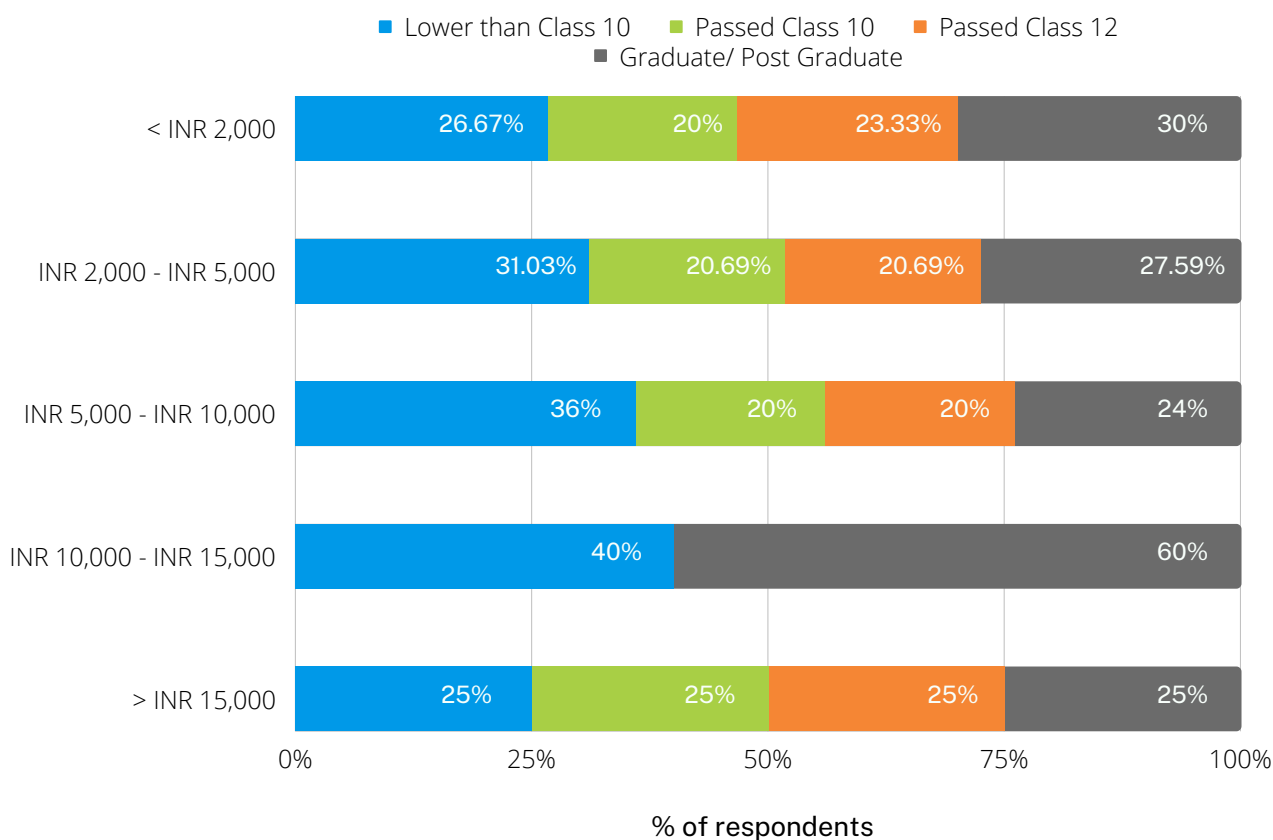
Income comparison before and after training



Over 63 percent of the respondents noted an increase in their creativity and their ability to create more designs and 56.5 percent attributed an increased ability to stitch more diverse products to the training provided under Project Saksham. Further, **nearly 60 percent of the respondents admitted to an increase in their efficiency and ability to complete orders faster.** Respondents also reported an increase in their ability to take on more orders and complete orders with higher finishing.

A significant change was witnessed in the incomes of respondents whose highest attained educational qualification was class 12 or lower. Most of these respondents reported being unemployed prior to training as they had limited avenues of employment available to them. However, after completion of the tailoring program, they were able to earn and gain financial independence.

Distribution of respondents' earnings post-training across educational attainment levels



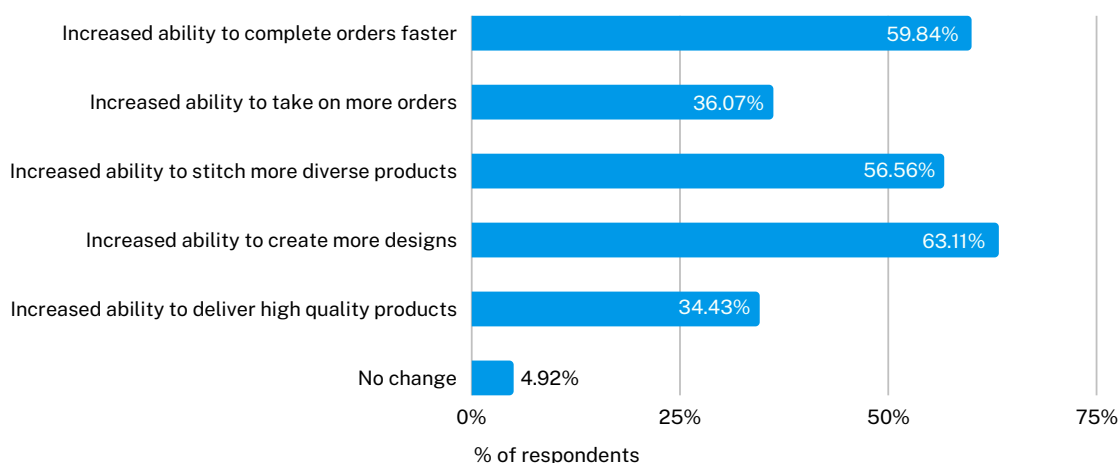
Changes in respondents' work after training

Over 50 percent of the respondents stated that they regularly applied the skills learnt during the training in their tailoring and stitching work, while the remaining respondents stated that they utilised their learnings based on the requirement of the work.

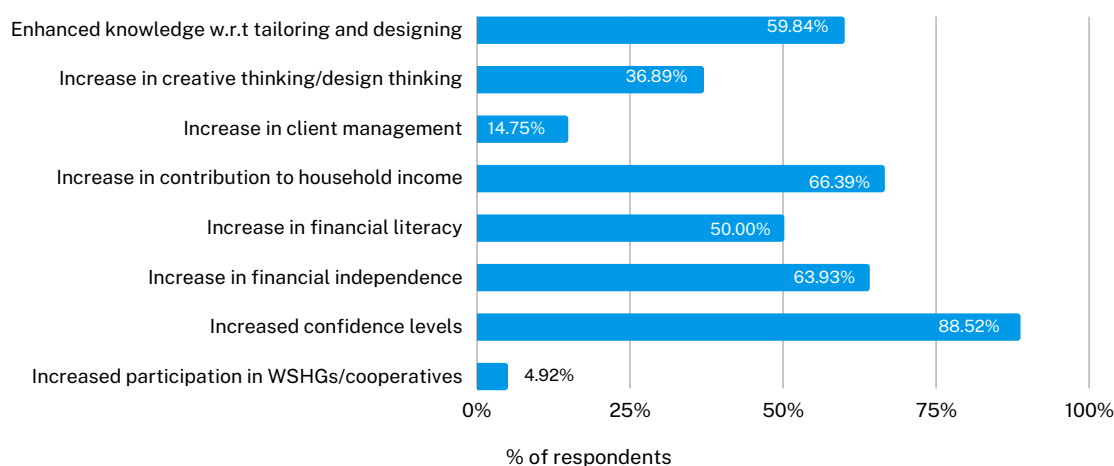
Around 88 percent of respondents reported an increase in their overall confidence levels after the training and 66.3 percent reported an increase in their contribution to their family's income. Furthermore, a significant percentage of respondents also reported an increase in their levels of financial literacy and financial independence, alongside an increase in knowledge pertaining to tailoring and stitching.

4.9 percent of the respondents reported organising themselves into self-help groups that provided the members with professional and personal advice and decision-making support alongside financial support through loans.

Changes witnessed in respondents' work post-training



Changes witnessed in respondents post-training



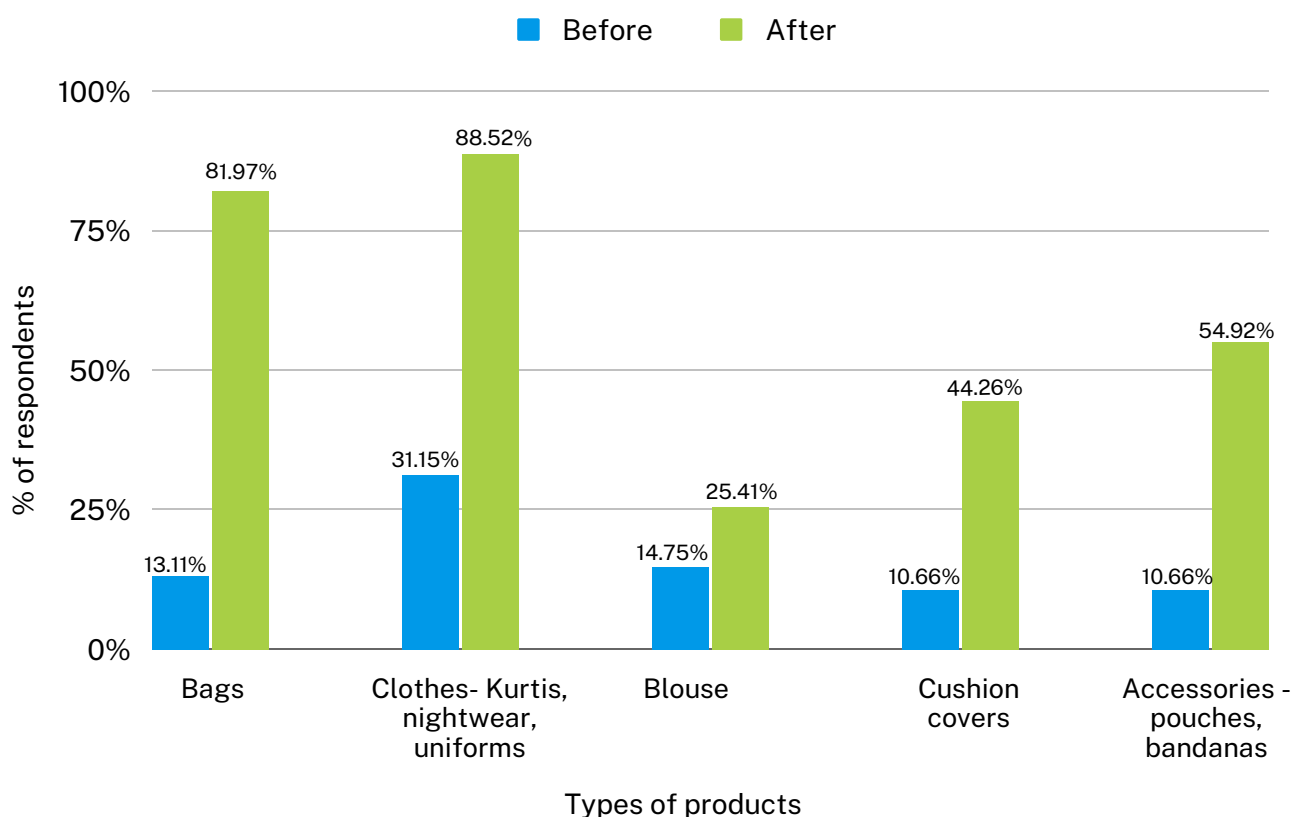
A program participant from Vashi states:

“There has been immense change in my quality of work since I enrolled in Project Saksham. The trainer here is extremely helpful and meticulous and encourages us to focus on the finishing of our products.”



Upon completion of the training program, there was a significant change noticed in the type of products that program participants were able to create. Before attending the tailoring training, only 13.1 percent of the respondents were able to create bags while after training, 81.9 percent of the respondents were able to do the same. A similar trend was observed across products such as kurtis, nightwear, accessories and cushion covers, where the percentage of respondents who could create these products more than doubled post-training.

Changes in types of products made before and after training



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A program participant from Jogeshwari centre states:

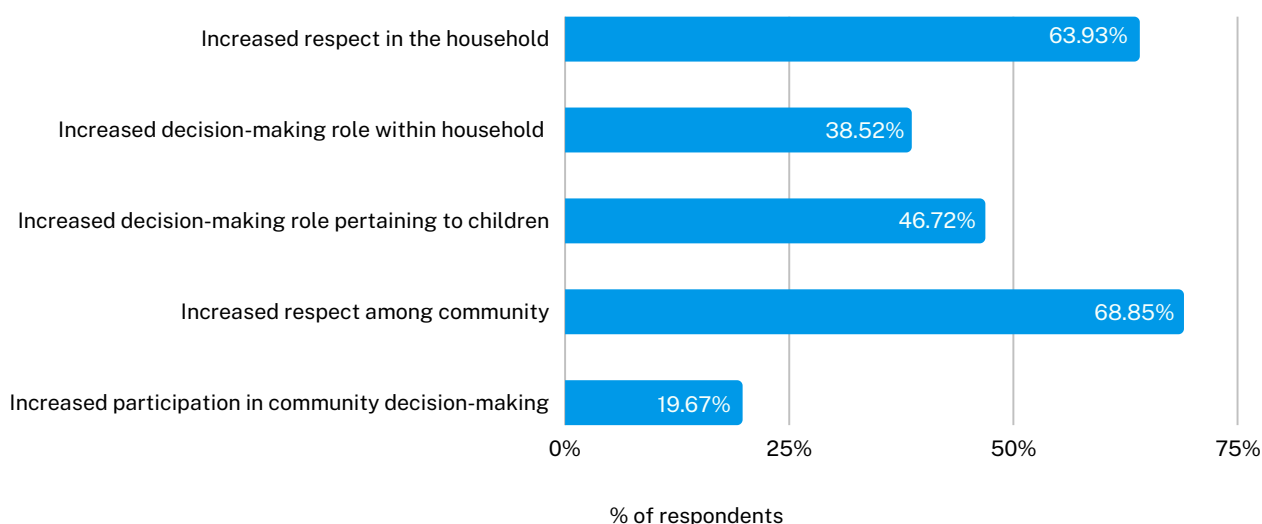
“Before I joined Project Saksham, while I did have intermediate knowledge of tailoring, my stitching was extremely basic. Since I completed my training, not only have I learnt to create more types of products but I’ve also learnt to stitch a variety of designs. The quality of my stitching has improved and I’m confident to take on new kinds of orders. I’ve always dreamt of opening my own boutique and while that dream seemed out of my reach earlier, with Project Saksham I am hopeful to achieve it. I now take on orders of my own and earn around INR 5,000- INR 10,000, people always praise my work and I have a consistent clientele in my neighbourhood. Project Saksham has also taught me client management and time management which helps me in my work everyday.”

”

Changes witnessed in trainee's role within households and communities

A majority of the respondents reported a significant change in the perspective of their family members as well as surrounding community members. Over 63 percent of the respondents witnessed an increased level of respect in their households and communities. 46.7 percent of the respondents stated that after completion of training, their role in the decision-making pertaining to their children and their present and future needs had increased. 38.5 percent of the respondents also reported a change in their decision-making role within the household, with their opinions and thoughts being given more weightage than before.

Changes witnessed in trainee's role within households and communities

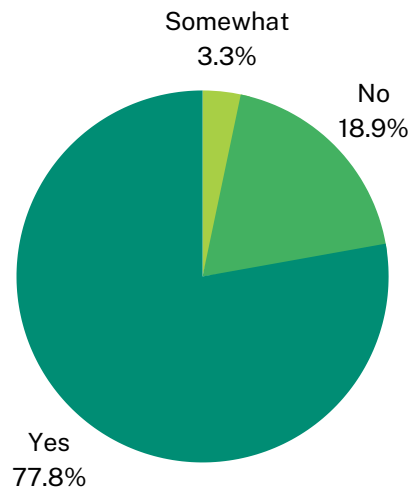


Support received from family

Around 78 percent of the respondents stated that there had been change in the perspectives of their family members over the course of Project Saksham. Some of the respondents reported living in joint families with significant household and care work responsibilities, but stated that their family members, especially the elders, grew supportive of them attending the training sessions. **Respondents also noted receiving greater support from their in-laws, husband, and children in the form of assistance in doing household chores, which enabled them to attend the training sessions without any barriers.**

18.9 percent of the respondents stated that their family members had always been supportive of them attending the training sessions and had always encouraged them to learn and earn.

Change in support received from family



A family member of program participant from Andheri (Mahakali) Centre states:

“My mother has had a transformative experience learning and working at Saksham. We've witnessed a change in her mindset- she has become more independent now, there is increased dedication in the work she does and her commitment towards the centre and other trainees. We've witnessed her professional growth as well, from being a trainee herself to rising up to the ranks of a supervisor. However, the biggest change has been her transition from a housewife who had never stepped out to now becoming a working woman, earning her own money and contributing to her family's income”



Support received from fellow trainees

The respondents highlighted that one of their major boons from Project Saksham was the personal connections and long-term friendships that they established at the training centre with their fellow program participants as well as the Project Saksham field staff and team. The respondents stated that the training centre not only provided them with a sense of belonging and purpose, but also provided them with a safe space to be their unfiltered selves, unwind, and discuss professional as well as personal problems with fellow trainees.

The respondents stated that the community built at the training centre not only provided opportunities for team work and peer learning but also helped the participants uplift and empower each other. For them, their fellow trainees provide them with a safe space to not only discuss their professional and personal problems, but to also help each other out by providing meaningful support and guidance.

“

A program participant from Andheri (Mahakali) Centre states:

“Not only has Project Saksham provided me with a skill for life, but has also provided me with an extended family for life. Every time I visit the centre, I feel like I’m home- all my stress and worries go away while I’m at the centre. I’ve forged long-term friendships and connections with several of my peers and we’ve continued to stay in touch long after the training ended. The community that we’ve built at Project Saksham helps us in learning and improving our work, while simultaneously making learning enjoyable”

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CASE STUDIES

Sushila, aged 60, became acquainted with Project Saksham through a neighbour. Sushila is a school drop out and has been a homemaker all her life. It was only when her husband fell seriously ill and her household income came to an abrupt halt that she realised she would have to step in to provide for her family. Sushila joined Project Saksham's Jogeshwari centre as it provided her with an immediate 'earning opportunity' from day 1 of the program. Over the course of the training, Sushila was able to earn and support her family. Her earnings contributed to her husband's treatment and covered the household expenses as well. Sushila says that more than the monetary support that she received from Project Saksham, her fellow program participants and the Project Saksham team have been very supportive. She says that they never made her feel alone and the sense of family and belonging that she has always felt at the centre helped her overcome the most difficult phase of her life.

Soni always aspired to work hard and provide for her family. She was determined to change the standard of living of her family and uplift them. Soni joined the Andheri (Mahakali) centre of project Saksham in 2016, against the wishes of her family and the surrounding community members. While Soni faced many hindrances in attending the training session, it was her passion and determination that made her consistent in learning. Post-training, Soni worked at the Project Saksham centre, working hard to improve the quality of her work and perfect her art. Over time, Soni recalls that her family and community members witnessed the change brought about in her due to the training program and being looked at with increased respect and pride. She says that several community members began using her as an example and started encouraging their daughters to learn stitching as well.

After a few years of working at the centre, Soni recently began working at a garment manufacturing unit, taking on the role of a supervisor. Soni's story is one of inspiration and determination- she went from having no prior knowledge of tailoring to becoming a supervisor at a nationally recognised garment manufacturing unit and from being unemployed to earning over INR 15,000 per month. Soni has also been a changemaker in her community, bringing about a change in perspectives and paving the way for young girls to follow in her footsteps and empower themselves.

Garment Manufacturing Partners Speak

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“The Team at ACT has immense empathy for the program participants and curates the training program aligned to their needs. The team has effectively built a community offering support and guidance to women belonging to underserved backgrounds leading to their empowerment. The women have also been able to overcome household challenges and sustain themselves and their families. Not only has Project Saksham contributed to the economic empowerment of women, but also instilled joy and confidence in them. Furthermore, the team has ensured consistent commitment to quality of products and we’ve always received a good quality supply of our orders.”

- Ms Savitha Rao, Rinew Green Products

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“The entire team at ACT has been extremely professional and the entire coordination of orders has been managed very well. The supply of orders by ACT is of good quality and there has always been great attention to detail. Team ACT respects everyone’s time and ensures timely completion of orders. They have consistently polished the skills of program participants over time and instilled in them efficiency and the importance of standardisation and deadlines.”

- Mr Stefano Funari, Second Innings Handicrafts

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Program Team Speak

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“Our vision for our target beneficiaries was to not only equip them with marketable skills, but to build their agency through soft skills training. We wanted to instil confidence, purpose and ambition in our program participants and provide them with avenues to pursue their dreams. Over the years, Project Saksham has empowered not just women, but has also brought about significant change in the mindsets of families and local communities. The impacts of Project Saksham have been far reaching- through our beneficiaries, their children have also been inspired to dream big and grow up to be independent.”

- Ms Nivedita Desai

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SOCIAL LENS COMMENTARY

Project Saksham is an advanced tailoring program, designed to impart technical tailoring knowledge and strengthen the capacity of women belonging to underserved communities. The program seeks to empower women by boosting their earning potential and their personal growth. Project Saksham's interventions provided comprehensive theoretical and practical sessions on stitching and tailoring and capacity building workshops to build entrepreneurial skills. It also provided post-training assistance to the program participants in the form of employment opportunities and access to the training centre for continuous learning and doubt-clarification.

The purpose of this assessment was to assess the efficacy and impact of Project Saksham and its interventions since its inception in 2016 to 2021. This study intended to understand the changes brought about by the program interventions in terms of changes in the employment status and earning potential of program participants as well as changes in their soft skills and their participation and contribution to their household.

The study showed that the program was able to achieve its target of honing the stitching and tailoring skills, strengthening capacity and providing avenues for livelihood generation for most program participants. Not only did the respondents report regular application of their learnings from the training sessions in their everyday tailoring work, but also reported a significant enhancement in their income levels and quality of life. Along with an improvement in their employment status and earning potential, the women reported a drastic increase in their confidence level and financial independence. For most of the respondents, the most significant changes were increased mobility, expansion of the livelihood opportunities available to them, and their transition from being homemakers to being employed. In addition to the significant personal growth and development, the respondents also reported increased respect, recognition and appreciation at the household and community level.

The program participants also received a certificate post completion of training to increase their likelihood of employability. The value of the certificates provided could be further enhanced if these are accredited to recognised government bodies and institutes at the state or National level such as National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Maharashtra etc.

One of the most significant outcomes of Project Saksham was the creation of a support system of fellow program participants. The personal connections and long-term friendships forged at the centre contributed to peer-learning and teamwork in addition to offering support and guidance to each other in personal as well as professional matters. These deep connections and networks created by the program participants are poised to enable and encourage them to continue their employment or entrepreneurial journeys in a sustained manner.

ANNEXURES

Sample Assessment Tools

For women trainees/ tailors

- Had you attended any other tailoring training sessions prior to Project Saksham? How were trainings under Project Saksham different?
- Which products are you able to create after attending the tailoring sessions?
- To what extent have you been able to apply the knowledge/ skills learnt through the tailoring sessions?
- What changes have you witnessed in your work post the training sessions? (change in efficiency / quality of work)
- Has there been any change in the number of customers/ contracts that you take on as a result of what you learnt in the tailoring sessions?
- Do you receive enough orders to keep you employed through tailoring throughout the year?
- Has the behaviour of your family members / community changed towards you after the program? Has your role/ contribution in your household/ community changed after the program?

For Trainers

- How do you identify individuals that need to receive trainings from the program? Is there a selection criteria? What is the background/ profile of the intended program participants?
- In your opinion, what were the gaps that Project Saksham aimed to address? In your opinion, what were the challenges the women in these communities faced in the absence of trainings such as those provided under Project Saksham?
- What are the topics covered in the training sessions? How are these selected / determined?
- In your opinion, which goals has Project Saksham been successful in achieving? What has been the overall impact of the program?
- What is unique about Project Saksham? What sets this apart?

For Partner Garment Manufacturing Companies

- What gaps in the tailoring industry is Project Saksham addressing?
- In what ways did you collaborate with the ACT staff to plan and execute Project Saksham?
- In your opinion, what is the importance of the certification received by trainees under Project Saksham?



Limitations of the study

1. Subjective bias - Participants (subjects) in an experiment have a tendency to act in ways that they believe the experimenter or researcher wants them to perform, whether consciously or unconsciously.
2. Cluster sampling bias - Cluster sampling bias is a sort of sampling bias that occurs only when cluster sampling is used. When some clusters in a given region are more likely to be sampled than others, this bias occurs.

Ethical Considerations

- Verbal consent was obtained from all survey participants for on-field and online data collection respectively. The participants could withdraw at any point in the study.
- The beneficiaries were identified and contacted through the implementing partners. The implementing partners were present during the data collection as deemed necessary by them.
- Confidentiality of data is maintained by the researchers.
- Unlawful means/ plagiarism are not reported to present data.

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