

---

1981

## Women and handicrafts: Myth and reality

Jasleen Dhamija

Follow this and additional works at: [https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/departments\\_sbsr-pgy](https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/departments_sbsr-pgy)



Part of the Entrepreneurial and Small Business Operations Commons, Family, Life Course, and Society Commons, Gender and Sexuality Commons, International Public Health Commons, and the Regional Economics Commons

**How does access to this work benefit you? Click here to let us know!**

---

### Recommended Citation

Dhamija, Jasleen. 1981. "Women and handicrafts: Myth and reality," SEEDS no. 4. New York: Population Council.

This Case Study is brought to you for free and open access by the Population Council.



SEEDS is a pamphlet series developed to meet requests from all over the world for information about innovative and practical program ideas developed by and for low income women. The pamphlets are designed as a means to share information and spark new projects based on the positive experiences of women who are working to help themselves and other women improve their economic status. The projects described in this and other issues of SEEDS have been selected because they provide women with a cash income, involve women in decision-making as well as earning, are based on sound economic criteria, and are working successfully to overcome obstacles commonly encountered. The reports are not meant to be prescriptive, since every development effort will face somewhat different problems and resources. Rather, they have been written to describe the history of an idea and its implementation in the hope that the lessons learned can be useful in a variety of settings. They are also being written to bring to the attention of those in decision-making positions the fact that income-generating projects for and by women are viable and have important roles to play in development.

# ***Women and Handicrafts: Myth and Reality***

*Story by Jasleen Dhamija*

---

## ***Introduction***

*Whenever planners, program developers and project directors are faced with the question, "how do we develop viable income-generating activities for women," the first thing that comes to their minds is handicrafts. The myth is that handicrafts are women's work — something they do well, an activity that presumably does not interfere with their domestic responsibilities, and one that requires a low level of investment and short gestation period. Rarely does anyone bother to look at the realities of the situation, either in terms of the handicrafts industry or in terms of the lives of the women the project proposes to serve. Few planners or program staff understand that handicrafts require specialized skills and often years of apprenticeship or that crafts which provide a reasonable income have already become the exclusive province of men!*

*The purpose of this pamphlet is to review handicrafts as a means of providing income to women. In some instances, crafts are a solid source of income and can also provide women with a link to their own cultural heritage. In most instances, however, crafts production concentrates women in an area that is labor intensive and exploitative, providing a meager income for long hours of work. Therefore, people interested in assisting women to earn income should first ask, are there other activities that would provide a better source of income than crafts? All possibilities should be given careful consideration. If handicrafts appear to be a viable option, there are still many additional questions that should be asked before starting a craft project. It is hoped that this pamphlet will help in that effort.*

## Handicrafts: What are they?

Let us first define handicrafts as discussed here as activities in which available materials, tools and skills, plus the producer's imagination and creative ability, are used to create objects. In some countries, the term handicrafts is extended to cover all activities where non-mechanized processes are used, e.g., activities such as food processing, making of food specialties and innumerable other handskills. We shall here confine ourselves to objects of utility and decorative value, a definition which is commonly accepted in the developing world.

## Feminine Crafts: Sex Roles and Discrimination in Crafts Production

Crafts which give good returns to the craft person, e.g., bronze casting, metal engraving, jewelry, lapidary, glass blowing, brocade weaving, etc., rarely are practiced by women. The skills are a domain of men and are strictly guarded and passed from father to son. A daughter is rarely taught these skills for it is assumed that she will marry, leave the family and therefore might impart the skills to her new family. Usually women practice crafts associated with their domestic lives, to meet their needs. Sometimes they are able to sell surplus items in local markets.

Generally the types of crafts which are introduced among women are euphemistically called "feminine crafts" for in many ways they are associated with the home. They are stitching, embroidery,

crocheting, knitting, weaving, basketry, mat making, and in some parts of the world, pottery. Those who think they are introducing new crafts promote tie and dye, batik and macrame.

If we examine these crafts, we will see that their "femininity" lies primarily in the fact that they are *essentially time consuming, provide little income, and are not easily upgraded to yield a higher price.* These crafts rarely prove to be a stepping stone into a small scale industry which would offer greater incomes to women. Whenever such activities are commercialized, the more remunerative part of the work generally is taken up by the men. Take the case of tailoring: the best paid job is cutting; this requires a special skill and in 90% of the cases, it is done by the men. The more laborious but lower paid work such as handstitching, finishing and stitching of buttons is given to women and they are paid the lowest wages.

The situation when "feminine" crafts are commercialized can be even worse. In India one of the big commercial operations in handicrafts is white embroidery done on fine cotton material called "chikanwork." The women who do this work are from the Muslim community and because of social customs are confined to their homes. They receive the work from traders (middlemen); for the handstitching of a shirt and its embroidering they earn a pittance equal to about U.S. 25 cents for eight to ten hours of work. Such wages are *exploitative.*





International Women's Tribune

### **Breaking the Myths of Stereotyped Roles**

Although most societies distinguish men's crafts and women's crafts, there is in fact no universal rationale in this division of labor. What is unacceptable in one society may be common practice in another. For example, we generally think of blacksmiths as men. But anyone who has travelled by road in northern India has seen women ironsmiths side by side, hammering in perfect rhythm the metals that are forged into agricultural implements. In most parts of Asia, pottery is the work of men, but in much of Africa it is taboo for a man to even touch the implements. Traditionally, women are supposed to be

weavers, but in most parts of Africa it is the man who weaves. The delicate and highly lucrative work of the goldsmith is the domain of men, but it could be termed a gentler art and women have shown that they can do it just as well. Today, one of the finest Turkoman jewelers in the Caspian area of Iran is a woman.

The truth is that *women can do any of the jobs which are done by the men provided they have the opportunity and the training.* If handicrafts are to provide viable income-generating activities for women then such distinctions must be overcome.

## The Lives of Rural Women

Before developing any type of income-generating program for women, but particularly handicrafts, it is essential to have a solid understanding of the lives of the women to be involved so that any new program is in fact a means of bettering women's lives and not just one more drudgery for the already overburdened to bear.

The rural woman is generally the provider of the family's basic needs. Her tasks are many and she is under tremendous pressure. Water has to be brought from long distances; fuel has to be gathered; and she produces and processes food for the family. Repairs to the house of a minor nature are her responsibility and she tries to meet the needs of the household by making containers from available materials, and by patching up the clothes or skins. Recycling, which has become such a fashionable word today, is her specialty. Worn out clothes are made into patched quilts; waste papers are pulverized and made into simple papier-mache bowls.

Before new activities can be effectively developed to provide cash incomes

so greatly needed by the rural woman, it is necessary to first *look at her life in its totality*. Are there ways in which her burdens could be lifted and shouldn't these problems be tackled first? In some settings, simple innovations of tools and facilities to reduce women's drudgery are necessary to give her the extra time needed for income-generating activities.

## The Do's and Don'ts of Handicraft Production

Before trying to develop any handicraft program designed to provide women with an income, it is absolutely essential to look at the existing possibilities open to women based on traditional or easily acquired skills, and to study present day demands for these products in the local and extended domestic markets. It is also necessary to consider the prospect for creating and managing the organizational structures which will provide needed support for the project. In some instances, a handicrafts program will be the answer; in other cases, it will not. For example India, with the majority of its population in the rural areas and a high unemployment rate, has successfully developed its handicrafts by pursuing a policy of protection for many years, and by providing various forms of technical assistance including a well developed marketing operation organized by the private and public sectors. Handicrafts, however, may not be an effective strategy for other countries which have a limited population and other possible avenues for employment. In some areas of Africa, where the land is fertile and women have traditionally farmed and marketed their products and have no restriction on their movement, handicrafts are probably not the best answer. Here, improvement of agricultural practices and food processing may often be a better means of increasing their incomes.

Before planning a handicrafts program, a comprehensive feasibility study should be undertaken.

## The Feasibility Study

A first step is to look at the overall economic situation, the work women already do, materials available to them and existing and/or potential markets for products. In most cases, this assessment should be done by experts since many of the facts and judgments required are of a technical nature and difficult to make.





*The rural woman is generally the provider of the family's basic needs. Water has to be brought from long distances; fuel has to be gathered; and she produces and processes food for the family.*





Some questions to ask include:

#### LOCATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

1. What women are available for training and production work (age, residence, cultural background, etc.)?
2. What income-earning work do women do now? Do they work outside their homes?
3. What skills (not just craft skills) do they have that might generate income? (These include skills they currently use and those that have fallen into disuse.)
4. Do the women need a regular livelihood or supplementary income?

#### TECHNICAL DATA

5. What are the techniques used for production and describe the types of technology available?
6. What are the raw materials to be used in the craft and are they locally available? What are their costs?
7. What other raw materials are available locally? Are they locally processed? What are their costs?

#### MARKETING

8. Where do local people sell their products? How and when? At what prices?
9. What are the prevailing prices for similar types of products made by hand and by machine?
10. What products are beginning to be demanded by the community which are not yet catered to by the local industries?
11. How long will it take to develop the new skills needed and to go into production?
12. Which markets are we aiming for? The local market? Extended market in the home country? An export market?

The following is an actual case where a feasibility study of this nature was carried out by an expert consultant for a government industry in charge of a rural, non-farm development program. A poor district in Kirman, Iran, was rapidly surveyed and it was found that:

a. It was an area having marginal agricultural activity dependent on the rains, which were erratic. The slack season was very long. Off-farm job opportunities were very limited, but every family had sheep giving a good quality wool.

b. All the women had primitive horizontal carpet looms. The carpets they wove were of very poor quality, but still retained the traditional tribal designs.

c. Older, finely woven carpets with the same designs sold at a premium in the antique carpet market.

d. The fine quality wool from the sheep was being sold to city merchants leaving the weavers of Kirman without good raw material.

e. Dyeing facilities were not locally available.

f. There were a few modern looms in the area belonging to the merchants. Here men were engaged in the production of fine quality carpets which were in great demand and provided good returns to the weavers. Some of the local men also owned their looms and thus not only earned wages but shared in the profits from the carpet sales.

The investigator also learned that large copper mines would be coming to the area in the next ten years. They would certainly attract many men away from weaving and would also raise incomes in the area thus expanding the market for carpets. Based on this knowledge and the information from the feasibility study, it was decided that it would be worthwhile to introduce a program to upgrade the carpet weaving skills of the women of Kirman.

The idea was to help the women to form a cooperative through which wool could be processed locally. The cooperative would increase their production by:

- giving them better quality raw materials;
- subsidizing the cost of new looms so that they could purchase their own equipment;
- upgrading their skills so they would be able to produce their own traditional patterns but in a much finer quality;
- and later, teaching the best of the weavers to read graph patterns so they would be able to introduce more colors and new designs.



International Women's Tribune

Through local home economics agencies, the women were gathered together and the project was discussed with them. It was discovered that the new vertical looms could not be introduced into their homes because the roofs were too low and there was not enough light inside. This problem was solved by suggesting that the subsidy to cover the cost of the loom also include the cost of materials to build a very simple shed attached to the home where two looms could be put back to back. The beams, the supports and tin sheets for the roof would be given as a grant by the government but the women, along with their families, would construct the shed thus giving their labor as their contribution to the project.

A government subsidy covered half the cost of the looms and the women paid the rest: ten percent as initial deposit with the remainder to be paid over the next year from the women's earnings. This was feasible because earnings for a year were projected at three times the cost of the loom. The ten percent initial deposit (approximately \$15) was a small amount for the women to raise from family sources. The women did this with great enthusiasm because ownership of the loom made them credit-worthy in the village economy.

The women were then given the raw materials from local cooperatives along with instructions on design and quality. A

master weaver assisted in the initial mounting of the warp on the new looms, started them off and provided periodic supervision. The master weaver was located in the village and the women could go to him if they ran into difficulties. One master weaver supervised fifteen looms with great ease. While the carpet weaving was in progress, the cooperative extended credit to the women to cover their daily needs such as flour, salt, oil, tea, sugar and lentils, items that women generally provide for their households.

After one carpet was finished, which took from 3 to 7 months, the women could sell it either to the cooperative or to the trader, whoever paid them a better price. The cooperative society calculated the basic weaving costs of the carpet and paid this base unit sum to the woman immediately upon production of the carpet, after deducting any advance she had taken. The carpet was then evaluated by an expert who fixed the actual value — the price at which it could be sold. This price was often higher than the basic unit cost. In this case 50% of the market price, in excess of the unit cost, also was paid to the woman. This acted as a good incentive to induce the women to produce very fine carpets, and slowly they became absorbed in the overall system of carpet production. Later on private dealers decided that women were more reliable than men, kept their promises

and worked regularly. Eventually the dealers began to induce women in nearby districts to take up fine quality weaving. This process was also helped by the fact that men were migrating to the towns in search of better job opportunities.

This project worked because it was based on careful assessment of prevailing socio-economic conditions, locally available skills and raw materials, and because there was a strong demand for the product. The opportunity to own their own looms, along with initial supervision and support provided in a flexible manner, enabled the women to enter a commercial operation formerly accessible only to men. Eventually they were able to be independent of any continuing government assistance.

### Diversifying Products

Other approaches to expanding craft incomes are to a) introduce new products or alter a traditional product without substantially changing existing skills, and b) introduce new skills and products. In both cases the feasibility study is even more important.

An example of developing new or improved products based on existing skills comes from a potters' village in India where the families for years had made water jars for the local market. Their actual weekly earnings from these items never went above six dollars per family. The introduction of a few new items requiring the same skills but directed to a modern market, e.g., candle holders, cut work lamps, garden lights and perforated small stands, brought not only a new clientele but also allowed them to charge

higher prices for their hand labor and thus increase their incomes.

In another case, Turkoman women wove beautiful silk but in narrow widths, for which there was a limited local market. By changing the beam and the combs of the looms, they were able to produce silk of 90 cm., for which there was a growing market, and thereby triple their earnings. Here a very nominal expenditure and hardly one week's training in the use of the new loom revived a dying craft and gave a regular source of income to a large village of women weavers.

In some cases a skill can be diverted to a totally new line of production for which there is a growing demand. Recently a project was developed in Ethiopia to divert the skills of traditional potters, who were making storage jars and cooking pots, to the manufacturing of indigenous construction materials such as bricks, tiles, pipes and large water storage jars. This answered the local needs for building materials and replaced imported tin and asbestos sheets. Without this diversion, these craftswomen would have very soon faced competition from the new plastic and pressed aluminum industries which produce lighter, unbreakable storage and cooking utensils.

The second means of diversifying products is to introduce new skills and materials. Some good examples of training women in crafts that they have not practiced before are glass cutting in India, screen printing in Kenya, and wood-block printing combined with tie and dye embroidery in Ethiopia.

Introducing new products usually requires training women in skills they do not

have, substantial investment in new equipment, much trial and error in production, careful supervision and the like. It should not be done except when existing products are nil or show no prospect for upgrading. It is imperative that the feasibility study be very carefully done with particular attention to market analysis and availability of raw materials, technical expertise and supervision.



Wherever possible low cost, locally available materials should be used. In Bangladesh the use of the simple jute fiber for the making of pothangers, bags, mats and a variety of utility articles, started by a cooperative society organized for the rehabilitation of war widows, has had unprecedented success. On the other hand the use of imported materials for crafts generally fails. An example of a poorly selected new skill and material was a scheme in the traditionally rich craft area of flower making in Ghana. This project failed because the synthetic material, imported at a high cost, was affected by the humid climate. The end result was artificial flowers that wilted faster than natural ones!

### Marketing

Marketing is a critical element in any handicrafts project and marketing problems have plagued most handicraft projects started by welfare organizations in the developing world. These centers often decide to start a handicrafts project without looking into the question of consumer requirements, available skills, existing market prices or regular outlets for their products. *It is imperative to make a thorough market study before any commercial handicrafts activity is started* and the study should be carried out by an expert.

There are certain aspects of the marketing of handicrafts which have to be borne in mind when starting a commercial enterprise:

- a. You must produce a high quality product. A badly finished article, not suitable for the purpose for which it is intended, will find few buyers and is poor publicity.
- b. Price your product competitively. An object which is available cheaper at other shopping centers will not attract customers.
- c. Always test a market with samples of your new products before taking up large-scale production.
- d. Rotate your designs and always have new designs to offer. Variety and change in products is crucial. Therefore keep abreast of consumer needs and do not be left with stock on your shelves.



United Nations

A women's organization in Kenya, Maendeleo ya Wanawake, which has members all over the country, has a number of groups working on handicrafts. The organization started a shop in Nairobi to sell their products. Though the shop was located in a commercial area and in front of a large, busy tourist hotel, it was not very successful. It lacked working capital to pay cash for goods on delivery from the women's groups. The lack of funds also prevented the marketing unit from developing new products and designs, since they were unable to supply the needed raw materials or buy the finished products from women on a cash basis.

A regional agency for assisting women in developing income-generating activities assessed the situation and felt that Mandeleo's initial setback should not be taken as a failure. They assisted the organization in the development of a new approach which includes provision of working capital and also supports a designer to develop new lines of production and a field worker to upgrade the skills of the women in order for them to produce a new range of merchandise. A key element in this approach is a well-motivated and competent technical staff who do outreach work and train women to organize themselves into associations, cooperatives or private production units.



While diversifying and upgrading skills and developing new markets, it is most important, however, *not to break links with traditional markets, which are regular markets*. This has happened with bad consequences in numerous cases. Two well-known instances have occurred in India. One was the case of the "bleeding madras", a checked cotton "lungi" material with running colors which became a short-lived fashion in the United States. Local weavers' cooperatives switched to the production of this new material, using fugitive dyes, and ignored the traditional market for the sarong, used by the local men. Suddenly the demand for the bleeding madras in the U.S. ceased and the cooperatives found themselves with huge stocks and no market. This drove a number of cooperatives into bankruptcy and a large number of weavers to the point of starvation.

In another case, the producers of *cire perdu* metal deities in central India received large orders from the government for export, for two years running. In the meantime they failed to supply the local

tribal population which had been their regular market and with whom they maintained a close cultural link. The link was broken and when the government failed to place an order in the third year, the workers faced real hardship.

Experience has shown that attention should first be focussed on finding markets within the country, first near the area of production, and then farther away in other towns or regions. These local markets are regular outlets and present minimal transport and marketing problems. In addition the home market is a discerning market that makes it relatively easy to establish consumer preferences. It also provides quick feedback to assist in setting acceptable standards of production and maintaining quality control.

Production for export, on the other hand, poses many very difficult problems: generally large and steady levels of production are required; products must be designed and quality maintained to suit foreign and often unknown tastes; and there are often complicated government regulations to deal with, to say nothing of

transport problems. Given these problems, much larger financial resources generally are needed to organize a successful export marketing operation.

In developing projects for the marketing of handicrafts, the needs of the women are a priority but the requirements of the commercial market also must be kept in view. A balance has to be kept between development activity and commercial operation. This requires experienced management. The well known Central Cottage Industries Emporium in New Delhi, India, is an excellent example of a successful operation of this nature. This organization was set up by a group of motivated social workers with government assistance. In a systematic way they began to apply sound commercial practices. New and old production centers were assisted in innovating new products, quality control procedures were set up and sales promotion campaigns began. Through their efforts they succeeded both in providing employment for low income women and creating the best in handicrafts. Their retail store is currently the finest shop for handicrafts in India.

#### **Institutional Support: Financial Resources and Protection**

There has been a tendency in women's organizations, be they voluntary

or governmental, to set up activities in different ways without linking them with existing institutions that could help them in the development of technical training, marketing and credit. Utilization of existing institutions can lead to a very successful program.

For instance, the Tunisian Government has developed a range of protective and supportive policies for small-scale industries under their new decentralization plan which provides special privileges to technically qualified entrepreneurs. Creative utilization of these policies is demonstrated by the Tunisian program of "Production Families." This program was organized by the Ministry of Social Welfare but with close links to the Tunisian Handicrafts Promotion Centre, another government organization. The two organizations jointly identified the craft to be developed and a training program was financed and initiated by the Ministry of Social Welfare. The instructor for the training, the raw materials and the designs came from the Handicrafts Centre so that the training was up to the standard needed for commercial production.

The trainees were given pocket money during the nine month course so they could afford to participate. Also the organization of the training program was arranged so that they would be able to



work independently upon completion of the training. The nine months of training was divided into two periods: during the first five months, the trainees worked under one roof with strict supervision; in the next four months, the tools and equipment were installed in their homes and they were taught to work on their own. Once independent, they still maintained their contacts with the commercial wing of the Handicrafts Centre and could either market their products through the Centre or to traders. The linkage with an existing specialized institution protected the program from the usual failure caused by low standards in skills and poor production which in turn lead to problems in marketing and exploitation by the traders, problems which, sadly, are common to most handicrafts centers initiated for women.



Jasleen Dhamija

### **Organizational Strategy — Groups Dynamics**

Another important element in designing a program in which women participate and from which they benefit, is to develop a good organizational structure. Whether it be cooperatives, associations, registered societies or traditional women's groups, it is important that the women be assisted in forming themselves

into viable economic units which prevent exploitation. The government and voluntary organizations can channel assistance to organized groups that they cannot provide to dispersed family units or individuals. Further, officially registered organizations can receive funds and disperse loans on a flexible basis to their members, whereas the conditions for loans to individuals are often far more strict and require collateral.

One of the most effective ways to build an organization is to build upon the foundation of traditional associations among women. These groups take many forms. One of the most common is the thrift society, such as the *tontin* of the market women in Togoland or the *arisan* in Indonesia. Here women meet regularly and at each meeting deposit a sum of money. The total amount is then made available to each of the members in rotation. This allows each woman to have sufficient capital at one time to make a major investment such as repairs on the house, buying bulk commodities for sale, purchasing tools or any other outlay that would be beyond her individual capacity. When such a group works well it can even provide guarantees for individual members who take out loans from outside agencies; it can act as a pressure group to see that loans are repaid and, if a member is unable to make a payment due to unforeseen circumstances, members can pool their resources to pay back a loan at the specified time.

Unfortunately, most development projects ignore traditional social groups and try to introduce new institutional structures. Acceptance of innovations and long-run success may often be greater if they instead attempted to strengthen existing associations to handle different activities.

The type of institutional structure usually introduced in connection with handicrafts projects is the cooperative along the western model of cooperative organization. This generally means that a system is introduced which requires detailed record keeping and therefore a relatively high level of literacy for the cooperative's leaders. Since women in many parts of the world are either non-literate or only marginally literate, leadership roles in such groups very often fall into the hands of literate men. It is therefore not hard to understand why women members in such groups soon loose in-





terest. If cooperatives are to be used successfully to help women it is necessary either to simplify the procedures or give expert managerial assistance. For example, in Iran a cooperative organizer was made available to assist in the organization and maintenance of rural women's cooperatives. Members were helped with complicated books, financial transactions, purchase of raw materials and sale of finished goods. The organizer also served as a link between the society and the cooperative marketing organization. This model has been very successful in Iran and could possibly be an effective way to provide this type of needed assistance to women's groups.

Another method developed by the handicrafts cooperatives in India involves provision of managerial assistance at the inception of the cooperative and for the first few years on a declining basis. At the end of this period it is expected that the cooperative will either have acquired the necessary managerial skills or will have sufficient income to pay a professional manager.\* Perhaps the most effective method would be a blend of these two schemes adding a component to train members to assume managerial tasks.

\*See the SEEDS issue, "Market Women's Cooperatives: Giving Women Credit"

Selected members would receive short-term, intensive training to prepare them for leadership roles within the organization.

It should be stressed that cooperatives are not the only answer. In the early stages, women may prefer to opt for a less highly structured form of organization. There are a number of intermediate forms of association that may be used to advantage such as the collective renting of space or buying of materials or organizational structures that provide a fixed wage for women plus an opportunity for profit sharing. The structure should be the one best suited to the needs and resources of the members.

In addition it should be remembered that associations of women are not just a way of organizing commercial enterprises. They also have a social function that makes the members feel a part of the community. In areas where social custom does not allow women to participate in activities outside the home or amongst men, a women's association can be a first step towards the outside world. Here members can meet other women having different life experiences and can participate in activities which also bring them out of the enclosed environment in which they often live.





United Nations

## Conclusion

Handicrafts can be a means of increasing income for women in some settings, but only under the conditions outlined above, since crafts are specialized activities which have limited markets and offer limited potential as a means of employment. The following points summarize a few of the key issues that must be addressed when considering a handicrafts program for women:

1. "Feminine" crafts are essentially time-consuming, give poor returns, and offer little possibility for upgrading skills.
2. Therefore, before embarking on a handicrafts scheme, study the existing conditions in which women are working, the possibilities that are open to them based upon traditional skills or easily acquired new skills, and prospects for creating and managing the organizational structure needed to provide support for a handicrafts project. Remember handicrafts are often a more complicated way of generating income for women than other choices such as food processing for local markets.
3. Think creatively about income-generating opportunities for women. Women can do any of the jobs which are done by men, provided they have access to the training and to the employment market!
4. It is imperative to make a thorough market study before any activity of a commercial nature is undertaken.
5. Links with the traditional market — which is a regular market — should not be broken while exploring new outlets for products.
6. Key elements of a successful project are a well motivated and competent technical staff and proper management that can give necessary guidance and help the group to diversify, uphold quality in the product line, and maintain access to markets.

It is necessary to exercise caution when developing the field of handicrafts. It can be a means of providing a viable income, but it can also be a means of exploitation, serving only to increase the burdens women already shoulder and cutting them off from opportunities to improve their economic and social position.

## APPENDIX

The following are sources of information about regional handicrafts programs, including technical assistance.

### Regional Organizations Providing Technical Assistance

#### AFRICA

African Training and Research Centre  
for Women (ATRCW)  
United National Economic Commission  
for Africa  
P.O. Box 3001  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
Attention: Mary Tadesse

#### ASIA

Women's Programme Centre  
ESCAP  
U.N. Building  
Rajdamnarn Avenue  
Bangkok, Thailand  
Attention: Daw Awe

All India Handicrafts Board  
Government of India  
Ramakrishna Puram  
New Delhi, India

#### LATIN AMERICA

Women's Programme Unit  
CEPAL  
Castilla 179/D  
Santiago, Chile  
Attention: Erma Garcia-Schfardet

#### CARIBBEAN

Women in Development Unit  
Extra-Mural Centre  
University of the West Indies  
Pinelands  
St. Michael, Barbados  
Attention: Peggy Antrobus

Women in Development  
6 Bartletts  
Christ Church, Barbados  
Attention: Lynn Allison

#### INTERNATIONAL

International Labour Organization  
CH 1211  
Geneva 22, Switzerland

International Trade Centre  
CH 1211  
Geneva 22, Switzerland

World Crafts Council  
20 West 55th Street  
New York, New York 10019 USA

### Technical Assistant - Consultants

Consultants in Development  
2130 P. Street, N.W.  
Suite 803  
Washington, D.C. 20037  
Attention: Maryanne Dulansey  
(Provides services on a fee basis in small enterprise development such as feasibility studies, management consulting, market research, and product development.)

### Publications

"Third World Producers' Guide to Alternative Marketing." by David Dichter  
for information contact:  
David Dichter & Associates  
9 Rue de Vermont  
1202 Geneva, Switzerland

"Notes on the International Workshop on Alternative Marketing Organizations and Third World Producers" (Sept. 3-8, 1976, Netherlands)  
for information contact:  
Stichting Ontwikkelings Samenwerking  
Kerkrade-Nederland  
Holzstraat 19

Consultants in Development (CID)  
Publications:

"Expanding the External Market for Third World Crafts: The Role of Alternative Marketing Organizations" (English, French, Spanish)

"Formats to Evaluate the Feasibility of Developing Small Industry Projects" (English, French, Spanish)

"Craft Item Information Form" (English, French, Spanish)

"Manuel, seminaire/atelier sur l'artisanat" (French)

All CID publications are for sale. In some cases they will be made available to Third World programs on an exchange of publication basis, at the discretion of CID.

for information contact:  
Maryanne Dulansey  
Consultants in Development  
2130 P Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20037 USA

---

**Design** John Cotterman  
**Typography** Lunar Graphics  
**Cover Photo** United Nations  
**Printing** Graphic Impressions, Inc.

**Jasleen Dhamija** is at present Chief of Small Industries and Handicrafts Division for African Women, a joint project of the International Labour Organization and the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa. She began her career in India 26 years ago in the pioneering work of developing handicrafts and rural industries. She also worked in Iran for six years with rural, non-farm activities and on curriculum development of applied arts and Asian culture at Farabi University. She has a deep involvement in rural development and folk art. She has written a number of books on the subject.

We invite your comments and your ideas for projects which might be included in future editions of SEEDS. If you would like additional copies of this issue or would like to be included on the SEEDS mailing list, please write to:

Ann Leonard, Editor  
SEEDS  
P.O. Box 3923  
Grand Central Station  
New York, New York 10163 U.S.A.

# Seeds

P.O. Box 3923 Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10163