

Karigari – Empowerment through employability



Karigari, a Literacy India programme has been transforming the lives of marginalised adult and adolescent women, and youth across India by providing them with training and livelihood in vocational areas, based on their aptitude and the demand for a particular skill, in the local economy.

Built on Literacy India's 3 main pillars - Education, Employment and Empowerment, Karigari's vocational training courses include

- Stitching, embroidery, tailoring, recycled paper product making, block printing, tie & dye, incense stick making, paper plate making
- Spa and beautician training
- Driving and hospitality management
- Eco/ Social tourism
- Computer courses

- Baking, cooking, food processing and food preservation courses
- Nursing
- Electrician and mechanic training
- Organic farming
- Training teachers for Gyantantra Digital Dost (GDD)

Recognising 'learning' as a tool for 'earning', Karigari encourages its recipients to 'earn while you learn'. In addition to vocational training, the programme imparts training in basic computer skills. The more advanced course teaches important mathematical concepts, science and social sciences and social issues such as voting rights, abuse and violence, financial literacy, women's sexual health, early marriage, etc using in-house GDD software.

Karigari programmes typically take 12 months, to ensure a batch of trainees are trained and linked to market-oriented jobs or set up their own businesses.

A unique selection process

Karigari 's beneficiary selection process includes focus group discussions with the community, to map the potential beneficiaries for training. Preliminary research is conducted to understand the available skills and preferences to ensure sustainable employability. Semi-skilled beneficiaries are also identified and enrolled under the entrepreneurship program to start their own business in the community, to create employment not only for oneself, but for others as well. Karigari also recognises the skills of artisans of a particular community and provides training to upgrade their skills and match market demands. Street plays, word of mouth, advertisements and online surveys are also used to select beneficiaries.

The programme

Every skill-building program follows a well-designed. Trainers track the progress of each beneficiary. Home visits, community discussions and regular monitoring of every beneficiary is done by the Karigrari Project Manager, counsellor and facilitators and feedback is given.

Beneficiaries who seek to enrol in advanced courses are also tracked. Placement advice and entrepreneurial help are provided under project

Karigari. This helps to ensure that the skills picked up are being utilised and provide either for advancement of skills, employment or setting up of business.

Women oriented

By focusing on women primarily, the project not only guides trainees towards economic and social empowerment, but also provides a sustainable environment for their children to continue learning. This way, the cycle of learning and earning is continuous.

Karigari believes that women are the torchbearers of a sustainable development process. Their potential as agents of change in the lives of their children and their communities needs to be harnessed. By increasing the number of skilled women in the workforce, Karigari not only empowers them, but also uplifts their families and communities. The ripple effect will eventually positively impact the development paradigm of the country.

Additionally, it recognizes the skills of artisans particular to the community and provides training to upgrade and match the demands of the market.

Making a difference where it matters the most

The Karigari programme now runs in 27 centres across Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Haryana, New Delhi, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.

In addition to semi-urban and rural geographies, Karigari projects are also implemented in tribal districts in some of the most under-developed regions of the country. It connects backward communities with modern livelihood options, thereby reducing societal inequalities and poverty.

Skills development

From 8 trainees in 1997, Karigar has trained more than 15,000 trainees today using the Gyantantra Udbhav software. e-training modules are conducted in different identified vocations listed above.

Developing employability

Today, rural and semi-rural women with tailoring skills are employed with export houses and boutiques. Marginalised women across New Delhi, NCR and the tribal communities in Jharkhand and West Bengal are taking driving

lessons. Women farmer groups are emerging as a result of the expansion of organic farming programs across West Bengal and Rajasthan. Hospitality training is enabling beneficiaries to run homestays and promote eco-tourism across North Bengal. 2016-17 saw more than 1250 participants complete the NIELET-accredited computer certification program along with Tally.

Working closely with business

Karigari's beneficiaries are 60% women and 40 % unemployed, semi-skilled young men. Most of them have been placed in different companies, or have received assistance for self employment.

Micro loans

Karigari also builds modules that facilitate enterprise support for women. For example, 7 karigars have availed of micro loans from Literacy India to purchase knitting machines and have started working from home.

Other small-scale enterprises that were supported include

- Organic farming & organic pit preparation
- Kitchen gardening and vegetable cultivation
- Mushroom cultivation, ajola farming
- Goat farming
- Bookbinding
- Mobile repair shop
- E-kiosk
- Tea stall

The extra mile

In Purulia in W Bengal, Karigari walked the extra mile into remote Maoist territory. Seasonal unemployment, wide-scale migration, alcohol addiction, no sustainable income, domestic violence and child marriage were the norm in the settlements there. After intervention by Karigari, the tribal people were encouraged to use their innate knowledge of the forest and engage in remunerative occupations such as organic agriculture, shaal leaf-plate making and conducting Chhau folk dance performances in other states. The income generated from these activities resulted in better education for their children,

better healthcare and better living conditions. Similar stories of change and empowerment have been documented in other locations in India.

Apart from the economic impact, Karigari has achieved various social impacts such as a reduction of alcoholism in youth and a reduction in the number of underage marriages in rural and tribal districts. The concept of saving for a rainy day has also been introduced and many Karigari communities now have a fund to which they contribute and use when required.

Karigari's ancillary programmes

INDHA, a Literacy India programme trains Karigari students to design, produce and sell a range of hand-crafted products online. Karigars sew clothes, knit sweaters and book orders from INDHA.

YOGKSTEM another programme was born from the need to establish women-based micro-enterprises. It includes units for advanced-level stitching and tailoring, advance level embroidery, pattal making, recycled paper product making, beauty care, tribal art, agarbatti making etc. Yogkshem has been established at 16 centres of Delhi NCR and across India.

Impact

Over the decades, Karigari has helped to build financial independence and confidence among its recipients. As earning members, women recipients have become a part of the decision-making process – traditionally a male dominated area. The program has also identified women leaders and helped them achieve their potential.

The project works closely with businesses to identify suitable and in-demand employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. Karigari's beneficiaries have been placed in different companies, or have received assistance for self employment. Successful linkages of development requirements with market-driven growth have brought modernization and technical know-how in these communities. A value chain network for the products and services has been developed. The beneficiaries have themselves set up entrepreneur packages for income generation. These micro-enterprises are run by women and owned by women.

With the help of various corporate donors, Karigari has been able to create a positive impact in the lives of more than 1,00,000 women.