

Progress of Shailsa Handicraft Producer Company Limited, Raebareli (Cluster of 500 Artisans)

Introduction

Raebareli district of Uttar Pradesh has long been known for its rich cultural heritage and traditional craftsmanship, particularly in embroidery. Over the years, the district has witnessed a gradual transformation in the handicraft sector due to institutional support, organized cluster development, and market linkages. One such successful initiative is the formation and growth of *Shailsa Handicraft Producer Company Limited*, which represents a cluster of around 500 artisans engaged in embroidery craft.

This cluster has emerged as a model for rural livelihood generation, women empowerment, and preservation of traditional art forms. The progress achieved by the company is largely due to the collaborative support of organizations such as District Industries Centre Raebareli, Development Commissioner Handicrafts, local SHGs (Self Help Groups), and various market stakeholders.

Background of the Cluster

Shailsa Handicraft Producer Company Limited was established with the objective of organizing scattered artisans into a structured entity that could collectively address production, quality, and marketing challenges. Before the formation of the company, artisans—mostly women—worked individually or in small groups with limited access to raw materials, finance, and markets.

The embroidery craft practiced in Raebareli includes intricate handwork such as chikankari-style stitching, zari work, and decorative thread embroidery used in garments, home furnishings, and lifestyle products. Despite possessing high skill levels, artisans were unable to achieve fair remuneration due to middlemen exploitation and lack of direct market access.

Formation and Structure

The producer company was formed under a cluster development approach, bringing together approximately 500 artisans across multiple villages in Raebareli. The company operates with a formal governance structure, including:

- Board of Directors (elected from artisan members)
- Cluster-level coordinators
- Production supervisors
- Marketing and sales teams

This structure has enabled transparency, accountability, and efficient management of operations.

Role of Supporting Institutions

1. District Industries Centre (DIC), Raebareli

District Industries Centre Raebareli has played a pivotal role in:

- Facilitating the registration of the producer company
- Providing training and skill upgradation programs
- Assisting in access to government schemes
- Supporting infrastructure development

DIC has acted as a bridge between artisans and government initiatives, ensuring that benefits reach grassroots levels.

2. Development Commissioner (Handicrafts)

The Development Commissioner Handicrafts has provided:

- Cluster development funding
- Design and technical development workshops
- Exposure visits and participation in exhibitions
- Marketing support through national and international fairs

These interventions have significantly enhanced the quality, design innovation, and market competitiveness of the products.

3. Local SHGs (Self Help Groups)

Self Help Groups have been instrumental in mobilizing women artisans. Their contributions include:

- Financial inclusion through savings and credit
- Encouraging participation in collective production
- Promoting entrepreneurship among rural women

SHGs have also strengthened social cohesion and built confidence among artisans.

4. Local Shops and Market Linkages

Tie-ups with local shops and traders have helped the company:

- Establish a steady demand for products
- Reduce dependency on middlemen
- Receive feedback on consumer preferences

Additionally, the company has gradually expanded to urban and online markets.

Skill Development and Capacity Building

One of the major achievements of the cluster has been continuous skill development. Training programs conducted under the guidance of DIC and DC Handicrafts have focused on:

- Advanced embroidery techniques
- Quality control and finishing
- Product diversification
- Time management and productivity

Design development workshops have introduced contemporary patterns while retaining traditional aesthetics, making products more appealing to modern consumers.

Production and Product Range

The cluster produces a wide range of embroidered products, including:

- Sarees and dress materials

- Kurtis and garments
- Cushion covers and bed linens
- Dupattas and scarves
- Decorative items

The introduction of new product lines has increased income opportunities and reduced dependency on seasonal demand.

Economic Impact

The formation of Shailsa Handicraft Producer Company Limited has significantly improved the economic condition of artisans:

- Increase in average monthly income
- Regular employment opportunities
- Reduced exploitation by intermediaries
- Access to fair pricing

Many artisans who previously worked intermittently now have stable livelihoods.

Women Empowerment

A majority of the 500 artisans are women, making this initiative a strong example of gender empowerment. The project has:

- Enabled women to earn independently
- Increased their participation in decision-making
- Improved their social status within families and communities

Women have also taken leadership roles within the company, contributing to its growth and sustainability.

Market Expansion and Branding

The cluster has made significant progress in branding and marketing:

- Participation in handicraft exhibitions and fairs
- Development of a unique brand identity
- Packaging improvements
- Entry into e-commerce platforms

Support from DC Handicrafts has been crucial in providing exposure to national markets.

Quality Improvement

Quality control mechanisms have been established to ensure consistency and customer satisfaction. These include:

- Standardized production processes
- Inspection at different stages
- Training in finishing and packaging

Improved quality has helped the company gain repeat customers and better market reputation.

Challenges Faced

Despite significant progress, the cluster faces several challenges:

- Limited access to large-scale markets
- Competition from machine-made products
- Need for continuous design innovation
- Financial constraints for scaling operations

However, with ongoing institutional support, these challenges are being addressed gradually.

Technological Interventions

Although embroidery is largely manual, some technological interventions have been introduced:

- Digital design inputs
- Use of improved tools and equipment
- Online marketing platforms

These have enhanced efficiency without compromising the authenticity of handcrafted products.

Social Impact

The initiative has had a broader social impact beyond economic benefits:

- Reduction in rural migration
- Improved education for artisans' children
- Better health and living standards
- Strengthened community bonds

The cluster has become a source of pride for the region.

Future Prospects

The future of Shailsa Handicraft Producer Company Limited looks promising. Key focus areas include:

- Expanding export markets
- Strengthening e-commerce presence
- Introducing eco-friendly products
- Scaling up production capacity

Continued support from institutions like DIC and DC Handicrafts will be essential for sustained growth.

Conclusion

The journey of Shailsa Handicraft Producer Company Limited in Raebareli is a remarkable example of how collective action, institutional support, and traditional skills can transform rural livelihoods. From a fragmented group of artisans to a well-organized producer company of 500 members, the cluster has demonstrated resilience, innovation, and growth.

The collaborative efforts of District Industries Centre Raebareli, Development Commissioner Handicrafts, local SHGs, and market players have created a sustainable ecosystem for embroidery artisans.

This model can be replicated in other regions to promote handicrafts, empower women, and generate employment. The success of this cluster not only preserves the rich embroidery heritage of Raebareli but also paves the way for inclusive and sustainable rural development.