

Rural Collective Enterprises Immersion Programme, Bajju, Bikaner



A live demonstration of the yarn weaving process conducted for participants during the immersion program

The Indian Micro Enterprises Development Foundation (IMEDF), a Section 8 company under the Development Alternatives Group, organised a three-day immersion programme on Rural Collective Enterprises in Bajju, Bikaner. The programme aimed to disseminate knowledge and insights on inclusive and regenerative entrepreneurship, with a focus on collective enterprises.

The workshop brought together 13 participants, including three guest speakers, from 13 organisations in the development sector. Participants represented a mix of 10 NGOs and three social enterprises, comprising senior professionals, Cluster Development Executives, middle management, executives, and artisans.

The programme featured distinguished faculty, including Col. Raman Thapar, General Manager, IMEDF; Sushila Ojha, Chairperson, Urmul Seemant Samiti; Anshul Ojha, Founder & Principal Anchor, Desert Resource Centre; Perna Agrawal, CEO, Urmul Desert Crafts; and Sunil Lahri, Leader, Urmul Seemant Samiti.

Programme Overview

Day 1 – December 2, 2024

The programme was inaugurated by Sushila Ojha, Col. Raman Thapar, Anshul Ojha, and Perna Agrawal through a ceremonial lamp-lighting. This was followed by a session led by Col. Raman Thapar, providing an overview of the SFURTI project and the collective entrepreneurship model in the Thar region. Perna Agrawal



Col Raman Thapar taking a session on Overview of SFURTI

highlighted the significance of *kasheedakari* and other desert crafts in Bajju, underscoring their cultural and economic legacy.

Participants also explored the CFC building, appreciating its architectural features, such as Rohtak domes, bottle walls, *chinari* work, and loose bricks for natural temperature regulation. A guided tour of units, including quality checking, stitching, weaving, and the showroom of finished goods, provided insights into the production process. The day concluded with interactions with artisans, offering valuable perspectives on their experiences.

Day 2 – December 3, 2024

The second day featured an exposure visit to 7 AD and Dandkala villages in Bajju, where participants gained insights into the lives of artisans practising *Suf* and *Sindh* forms of *kasheedakari*. These artisans have preserved their craft for over 30 years, showcasing techniques in hand weaving and discussing the role of IMEDF SFURTI's Natural Dye Cluster in enhancing visibility and market linkages through Rangсутra, Fab India, and Urmul Desert Crafts.



Artisans sharing their insights on weaving legacy of Kasheedakari in 7AD village with participants during exposure visit

The day also included a visit to Grandhi village for an interaction with Genda Ram, a camel herder managing 400 camels. Participants were introduced to the Camel Partnership and Pastoral Livelihoods, emphasising the critical role of camels in the desert's ecology and local livelihoods. The initiative addresses challenges faced by camel herders, promotes sustainable use of camel resources, and facilitates market access for camel milk and its products.

Day 3 – December 4, 2024

On the final day, participants toured a dairy farm and an organic farm, gaining insights into integrated practices within the campus. They observed activities such as using cattle dung to create pallets for agricultural use, organic farming practices, and the production of biogas and vermicompost. The biogas generated is used in the campus canteen, exemplifying the principles of a circular economy.

The tour included the milk processing unit, where participants witnessed the packaging process and interacted with workers to understand the market chain.

The immersion programme showcased the blend of traditional and innovative practices in fostering a circular economy in the Thar region. It highlighted the collective efforts to ensure market access and promote income generation activities for artisans and farmers, aligning with IMEDF's vision for inclusive and regenerative entrepreneurship.



Kabita Didi, SPV member of Jungal Mahal Tasar sharing her experience during the session