



FOUNDATION FOR
MSME CLUSTERS



sidbi switchasia



CBS

CASE STUDIES

PROMOTE BAMBOO MSME CLUSTERS
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

ISSUED BY FOUNDATION FOR MSME CLUSTERS (FMC)

AUGUST 2021

The page has been intentionally left blank

Disclaimer

This Case Study Report has been prepared by Foundation for MSME Clusters (hereinafter referred to as 'FMC') in August 2021 under the project "Promoting Bamboo MSME Clusters for Sustainable Development" funded by the European Union.

The inferences and analyses made by FMC in this report are based on information collated through primary research, secondary research, discussions with the key stakeholders and our knowledge with respect to the bamboo cluster development initiatives undertaken under the project. FMC has taken due care to validate the authenticity and correctness of the information from various sources, however, no representations or warranty, expressed or implied, is given by FMC or any of its respective partners, officers, employees, or agents as to the accuracy or completeness of the information, data or opinions provided to FMC by third parties or secondary sources.

Nothing contained herein, to the contrary and in no event shall FMC be liable for any loss of profit or revenues and any direct, incidental, or consequential damages incurred by the user of this report.

In case the report is to be made available or disclosed to any third party, this disclaimer along with all the limiting factors must be issued to the concerned party. The fact that FMC assumes no liability whatsoever, if for the reason any party is led to incur any loss for acting upon this report, must be brought to the notice of the concerned party.

© FMC, 2021

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	5
II.	From Seasonal Bamboo Worker to Retailer: Barange' s Story of Perseverance	6
III.	Delivering Sustainable Bamboo Upholstery to Taj Group: Nandita's Story of Entrepreneurial Success	8
IV.	Environment-friendly Air-Cooler Pads with Bamboo & Dry Grass: Sasmita's Story of Empowerment through Diversification	10
V.	Replacing Plastic-Wares with Bamboo: Mandram's Story of Success through Innovation.....	12
VI.	Taking Assam's Bamboo Handicraft to India: Md. Azad's Story of Achieving the Odds	14
VII.	Crafting Contemporary Utility Products from Bamboo: Lalduhkimi's Story of Success through Design Innovation.....	16
VIII.	Producing Tree Guards for Sambalpur's Green Cover: Gelhei's Story of Success through Adaptability.....	18
IX.	Establishing a State-of-the-art Incense Stick Factory: Goswami's Story of Entrepreneurial Success	20
X.	Empowering Woman SHGs of Deogarh: Mukesh's Story of Driving Change through Aggregation	22

Table of Contents (Continued)

XI.	Producing Modern Amenity Products for Tourists: Judisha’s Story of Utilizing Bamboo to Fight Poverty	24
XII.	Colourful Basketry for Pilgrims of Baba’s Dham: Phulkumari’s Story of Forging New Market Linkages	26
XIII.	Crafting Contemporary Utility Products from Bamboo: Lalduhkimi’s Story of Success through Design Innovation.....	28
XIV.	From Retailing Sarees to Trading Bamboo Products: Neelam’s Story of Embracing Opportunity.....	30
XV.	From Daily Wage Worker to Bamboo Artisan: Lalramthangi’s Endeavour to Tackle Poverty	32
XVI.	From Agricultural Labour to Bamboo Artisan: A Story of Rakhis’ Strive for Empowerment	34
XVII.	Levering the Power of Online Marketplaces: Giogi’s Story of Taking Bamboo Murhas to the World	36

Introduction

The project “Promote Bamboo MSME Clusters for Sustainable Development” was launched in the year 2018 by Foundation for MSME Clusters (FMC), along with its partners Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), and Copenhagen Business School (CBS) and associates Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) and RGVN (Northeast) Microfinance Ltd. The objective of the project is to promote bamboo as a sustainable resource and generate green jobs in India. The project action has been designed to help the local community and other stakeholders collaborate for the promotion of green economy, sustainable growth, economic prosperity, and poverty reduction in India along with mitigation of climate change. Bamboo MSME clusters in the 9 states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh are being covered under the project.

With 3 years into the project, FMC and its partners and associates have been able to transform the lives of hundreds of bamboo artisans and entrepreneurs by enhancing their productivity and competitiveness. Gaining momentum from the cluster development activities, the bamboo artisan and entrepreneurs have been able to multifold their income, hence their standard of living. The impact is not limited to the particular artisan/entrepreneur but has penetrated to all levels of the cluster. Other than poverty alleviation, widescale adoption of this green resource as a raw material has led the economy a step further towards carbon neutrality. This case study report highlights a few cases of success, touching upon their baseline condition, FMC’s handholding and factors that led to their success.

To develop the report, a single case study was selected from each state under the project. The field team collected relevant information and metrics from the concerned artisan/entrepreneur. Other stakeholders in the cluster were also interviewed to understand the direct/indirect impact the particular artisan/entrepreneur’s success had on the cluster in general. The collected information was then collated and analysed to determine qualitative and quantitative aspects of the particular case study.

Through this case study report, FMC wants to encourage other bamboo artisans and entrepreneurs, nationally and internationally, to adopt similar strategies to break away from the shackles of poverty, together with mitigating climate change.

01 Pramod Barange

Betul, Madhya Pradesh

From Seasonal Bamboo Worker to Retailer: Barange’s Story of Perseverance

Case Study Overview

Products	Home Decor	Furniture
	Jewellery	Utility Items
Intervention Areas	Skill Upgradation	Finance
	Market Linkage	Technology
Income Per Annum	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
	INR 48,000	INR 2,88,000
Beneficiaries	Direct	Indirect
	5 family members	30 cluster units

Hailing from the Betul District in Madhya Pradesh, Pramod Barange was a seasonal bamboo worker earning a meagre income of less than Rs 4000 a month. He used to craft a limited number of bamboo products like baskets, winnowing pan, lampshades, and jewellery. Dedicating about four to six months in bamboo craft, he used to showcase his products in the regional markets on a

weekly basis. With a family of 5, he desperately tried to improve on his income. His scope got limited due to hindrances in market linkage, finance, and skill.

The FMC team identified Barange’s potential and provided him assistance with a dual-pronged strategy to improve on his products and production capacity. The former was achieved through incorporating latest design to existing products, developing new products, and upskilling Barange and his artisans. Production capacity was improved by assisting him in obtaining credit of Rs 42000 under Mukhyamantri Swarojgar Yojana from Bank of Maharashtra. The team gave special effort on improving Barange’s communication and marketing skills.

He has rented 2 shops on the Betul-Nagpur Highway and an active participant at regional and state level exhibitions. He produces a wide variety of items including furniture and décor items. He has also been incorporated as a trainer at FMC, where he skills other artisans in the cluster. The efforts paid off with Barange shifting from being a seasonal bamboo worker to a full-time bamboo artisan earning Rs 24000 a month, a 6-fold increase in income. His success has motivated other artisans in the cluster to take up bamboo as a full-time work with 30 units producing high quality bamboo craft. With Barange’s extraordinary willingness to break away

from the vicious cycle of poverty, he has proved that with the right effort and handholding every glass ceiling can be shattered.



02

Nandita Chakraborty

Dharmanagar, Tripura

Delivering Sustainable Bamboo Upholstery to Taj Group: Nandita’s Story of Entrepreneurial Success

Case Study Overview

Products	Window Blinds	Table Mats
	Tea Coasters	Boxes/Pouches
Intervention Areas	Financial Linkage	Technology
	Skill Training	Market Linkage
Income Per Annum	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
	INR 5,22,000	INR 19,80,000
Beneficiaries	Direct	Indirect
	18 workers	6 cluster units

On a Monday afternoon in early August 2021, Nandita Chakraborty was seen pacing through her new production floor at Dharmanagar in North Tripura district of Tripura. She had been closely supervising the production of her new line of bamboo upholstery to be delivered to Taj Vivanta, Guwahati. With the deadline closing in, Nandita was determined to fulfil the order on time,

together with maintaining high quality- as desired by her new client. Starting its operation in June 2021, Nandita’s 740 sq. ft workshed houses a range of modern equipment, necessary to produce a diverse range of premium bamboo-mat based products. It was established with FMC’s support under the project “Promote Bamboo MSME Clusters for Sustainable Development” and is already supplying to Art of Living, Taj Group of Hotels, and retailers from large metro cities in India.

Nandita Chakraborty, a female entrepreneur in her later 30’s, established *Srishti Crafts* in 2014. Working with a small team of 3 artisans, Nandita produced boxes and pouches made of bamboo mat. In Tripura, a number of handicraft items are fabricated out of bamboo mats where bamboo splits form the weft in a cotton or rayon warp. Produced from the outer layer of the bamboo, bamboo splits are widely available in the region. Handicraft units, similar to that of Nandita’s, weave these fine bamboo splits with rayon threads – giving it the texture and placidity of fabric. These flexible bamboo mats are then fabricated into utility and decorative products. *Srishti Crafts* managed a turnover of Rs 5.22 lakhs per annum, earning a gross profit of 12%.

FMC's team was conducting a seminar in the region, where they came across Nandita. On a market study, FMC had already identified a potential for bamboo mat products. There was a growing demand in the hospitality sector, who are willing to shift to sustainable products to reduce their carbon footprint. Bamboo mats can be used to produce hospitality upholstery like window blinds, table mats, coasters, pouches, and boxes. It can also replace daily use plastic products like folders, file covers, yoga mats, etc.

Learning about Nandita's interest in diversifying her business, FMC proposed to technically assist her on a concept-to-commission basis. Soon FMC developed a technical and financial proposal for a modern production unit that can manufacture premium bamboo-mat products for modern utility. A loan of Rs 8.64 lakhs was sanctioned from the Punjab National Bank and *Srishti Crafts* received a subsidy on the capital investment under the Government of India's Credit Linked Capital Subsidy scheme. The construction of the workshed took 6 months, and FMC assisted Nandita in procuring and installing mat weaving handlooms, industrial sewing machines and product assembling tools. FMC further trained the new workers which included 18 artisans and a supervisor. The new line of products was displayed in FMC's e-portal for higher outreach and within a short period of time, Nandita started receiving orders from reputed clients. Currently, the 18 full-time workers are toiling 6-8 hours a day to meet the production demand.

With a shift in industrial and consumer demand to sustainable utility items, Nandita's business is envisaged to flourish with time. She is expecting a turnover of Rs 19.80 lakhs in the first year of operation. Nandita's story of entrepreneurial success has reached across other bamboo clusters – with many expressing their interest to establish a similar unit. It is a matter of time that bamboo-mat products will be widely available in markets across, replacing harmful plastic counterparts – bringing in an era of sustainable growth.



03 Sasmita Bhue

Sambalpur, Odisha

Environment-friendly Air-Cooler Pads with Bamboo & Dry Grass: Sasmita’s Story of Empowerment through Diversification

Case Study Overview

Products	Cooling Pads	Winnowing Tray
	Seeding Basket	Livestock Cage
Intervention Areas	Market Linkage	Financial Linkage
	Skill Training	-
Income Per Annum	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
	INR 15,000	INR 1,00,000
Beneficiaries	Direct	Indirect
	6 family members	20 artisans

The quaint village of Kilasama in Sambalpur district, Odisha had never witnessed the latest handiwork of Sasmita. The bamboo artisan had been busy making rectangular frames from thin layers of bamboo, tufting them with layers of dried grassroot. Traders from near and afar would frequent the village to collect her produce. Inquisitive of the developments, a group of artisans visited Sasmita Bhue’s

home in October 2020 - learning that her new product was a cooling pad, a necessary component for air-coolers.

Sasmita Bhue, a 27-year-old bamboo artisan used to weave a number of traditional bamboo basketry including winnowing trays, seeding baskets, ritual baskets and even cages for hens and other livestock. Working as per seasonal demand, Sasmita hardly earned Rs. 15,000 a year. The onset of the Covid pandemic in March 2020 led to a fall in demand for bamboo basketry used in local rituals and marriages, leaving her with negligible income to support her family.

Air-coolers make a significant part of the household across the states of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi. The appliance reduces room air temperature during summer periods of arid heat wave. A necessary component of these air-coolers are cooling pads, which are made of dry grass in a bamboo framework. Artisans have to work from October to April, so that traders can supply throughout the summer months, when the demand for cooling pads are significantly high. Sasmita was introduced to the craft of cooling pad manufacturing, when she attended a training workshop under FMC’s “Promote Bamboo

MSME Clusters for Sustainable Development” project. A quick learner, Sasmita soon started manufacturing these cooling pads. FMC was soon able to link her with traders from both Odisha and Chhattisgarh and also facilitated a working capital loan of Rs 10,000. FMC further trained her to maintain proper accounts, improving her financial efficiency. She also received assistance in obtaining an Artisan card from DC Handicrafts, which would enable her to avail beneficial schemes in the future.

Within a period of 6 months, Sasmita was able to sell cooling pads worth Rs 1,00,000 earning Rs 50,000 in profits. Sasmita, together with her husband, is determined to sustain the growth by maintaining product quality and on-time deliveries. The opportunity has allowed her to save Rs 1500 per month for her daughter’s future. She also sets aside the surplus income in her savings bank account to accommodate for future expenses, especially for health care - accumulating Rs 12,000 so far. Learning from her success, 20 more artisans from the village have taken up the cooling pad manufacturing, and are also experiencing similar growth. Sasmita’s story is a leading example of how a tryst between artisanal skill and product innovation can bring about holistic development in the poverty nodes of India.



04 Mandram Tikka

Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh

Replacing Plastic-Wares with Bamboo: Mandram's Story of Success through Innovation

Case Study Overview

Products	Home Temples	Lamp Shades
	Pen Stands	Basketry
Intervention Areas	Design Innovation	Financial Linkage
	Skill Training	Market Linkage
Income Per Annum	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
	INR 45,000	INR 2,50,000
Beneficiaries	Direct	Indirect
	7 family members	6 artisans

Mandram Tikka and his wife has been keeping busy for the last few months. With the large volume of order from the new market linkages, the duo along with 4 other artisans have to work 9 hours per day, starting at 6 am in the morning. The work usually begins with preparing the bamboo in a process called splitting and slicing. The artisans then transform the processed bamboo into an

array of utility and decorative products like flower vases, candle stands, home temples, *supa* and *tukris*. The products are mostly sold to traders, who would resell them to distant markets in India's towns and cities. But what led to this boom in demand?

Originating from a family of Bastar tribals, traditionally involved in bamboo craft, Mandram has had humble beginnings. With limited exposure and little capital, Mandram used to produce traditional bamboo wares like *jhuris*, *supa* and *jhapis* to be sold in the weekly *haats*. Used mostly by local households, these basic bamboo wares fetched little price from the market. Working with his wife, 8 hours a day, Mandram could barely support his family of 7 with his limited income of less than Rs. 250 per day.

During the inception phase of FMC's project "Promote Bamboo MSME Clusters for Sustainable Development", the field had been visiting several villages in and around the Bilaspur bamboo cluster. FMC identified Mandram as an artisan with growth potential, and encouraged him to participate in a skill upgradation program to be held at Kudal, Maharashtra. The program provided Mandram with much-needed exposure and skill to craft modern products, made of bamboo. These products like lamp shades, home temples, pen stands used

the same green resource i.e bamboo, which was available in plentiful in and around his village in Bilaspur. The products though had greater demand and profitability.

Equipped with new designs and skill, Mandram was quick on his toes to turn opportunity into reality. He came back to his village and trained his wife along with 4 other artisans. Subsequently they formed a new unit named *Laxmi Baans Kala Kendra*, further applying for artisan cards. FMC's team further enhanced their efforts by connecting them with traders and helping them participate in district and state exhibitions – also assisting them to arrange for a working capital credit of Rs.40,000 from a local microfinance institute.

Laxmi Baans Kala Kendra, now has an annual turnover of Rs. 10 lakhs, with the 6 artisans toiling throughout the day to fulfil orders for their new bamboo products. Mandram and his wife, with similar work hours can earn a proper living, through increased revenue and profitability. Mandram' s story reflects how the right concoction of cluster development strategy, together with an individual's willingness and effort can bring about positive changes in their life and the society as a whole.



05

Md. Abul K. Azad

Barpetta, Assam

Taking Assam’s Bamboo Handicraft to India: Md. Azad’s Story of Achieving the Odds

Case Study Overview

Products	Home Decor	Furniture
	Utility Products	Jewellery
Intervention Areas	Financial Linkage	Market Linkage
	-	-
Income Per Annum	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
	INR 1,80,000	INR 10,00,000
Beneficiaries	Direct	Indirect
	8 workers	25 artisans

It was half way through the exhibition at Guwahati, that Md. Abul had sold most of his products. With a heavy footfall that year, the exhibition had 2 more days to go. A trader, by profession, Md. Abul had brought his bamboo utility and handicraft products all the way from Barpetta district in Assam, to be displayed on this 5-day exhibition. The intricate and sturdy designs attracted a number of customers and Md.

Abul was already on his way home on the third day of the exhibition. While he gathered his belongings, a thought stuck him – *what if he had more items to sell?*

The Barpetta bamboo cluster has been in existence for centuries. With an abundance of bamboo forests in the region and a rich heritage of bamboo craftsmanship, Barpetta’s cane and bamboo products are a sought-after item across India. Md. Abul Kalam Azad is one of the many traders, who takes these products from the artisans to the market, mostly via fairs and exhibitions. He would travel across the country, showcasing his products in temporary stalls, earning Rs 12-15 thousand a month. With the festive season approaching in 2019, and stuck with idea of expansion, Md. Abul decided to participate in an awareness camp organised by FMC at Barpetta.

FMC, under the project “Promote Bamboo MSME Clusters for Sustainable Development” was looking forward to provide market linkages to the existing artisans at Barpetta cluster. Discovering Md Abul’s market knowledge, FMC understood that he can be a potential vehicle of growth for the cluster – providing much need forward linkage. There was only one hurdle – limited working capital. FMC took note of the issue and assisted Md Abul to apply for a loan

of Rs 4,75,000 from SBI under the PMEGP scheme. The loan got sanctioned in due time, and Md Abul was on his way to exhibition tours – but equipped with a larger portfolio of bamboo products.

Once a small trader, Md Abul now procures cane and bamboo products worth Rs 25 lakhs per annum. Earning Rs 10 lakhs a year, Md Abul employs 8 workers to smoothly conduct his business. The trickle-down effect can be observed at the artisan households, who are busy fulfilling orders for Md Abul. Their income has also multi-folded over a period of 2 years, enabling them to afford a quality life. Md Abul's story strengthens the ideology of cluster development for economic progress, where in a network of producers, traders, support and financial institutions – the right nudge can provide a plethora of positive results.



06

Lalduhkimi

Aizawl, Mizoram

Crafting Contemporary Utility Products from Bamboo: Lalduhkimi’s Story of Success through Design Innovation

Case Study Overview

Products	Mirrors	Vases
	Small Furniture	Basketry
Intervention Areas	Design Innovation	Financial Linkage
	Skill Training	Market Linkage
Income Per Annum	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
	INR 25,000	INR 1,00,000
Beneficiaries	Direct	Indirect
	4 workers	20 artisans

Lalduhkimi, a Mizo artisan in her early 40s, had witnessed the art of bamboo craft from her childhood. In the hilly village of Edenther, her mother and other artisans of the tribal community would gather every afternoon to weave thin slices of bamboo into beautiful basketry. With abundant bamboo forests at Mizoram, these tribal Mizo communities, for generations, have made a livelihood producing bamboo

items. Following the footsteps of her mother, Lalduhkimi took to bamboo craft and started weaving a number of traditional utility items and basketry, selling mostly to the middlemen and local churches. With an annual turnover of Rs 25,000, Lalduhkimi’s growth stagnated due to unavailability of finance and market linkage.

Learning about Lalduhkimi’s skill and potential, FMC’s team incorporated her in the Skill Development Training program. During the program, she was always on her toes and showed a knack towards crafting trendy products out of bamboo. This included designer household items like mirrors, vases, and small furniture. These products were an instant hit with the various handicraft shops in the state. With a period of 3 months, FMC facilitated a credit line of INR 1,00,000 from Northeast Small Finance Bank. The amount was to be provide for her working capital requirement for the additional demand generated for her products by FMC.

Lalduhkimi hired a team of 4, together with registering her unit under Udyam. Within a span of a year, her turnover shot to Rs 1,00,000 with an increase in profitability by 20 percent. This can be attributed to the trendy designs that sold at higher margins. With a steady income, Lalduhkimi can now save a significant portion in the bank account, especially for health care

needs. She renovated her home with a part of the savings, providing her family with better amenities.

Over the period of time, Lalduhkimi earned a prominent position in the bamboo craftsperson's community of Aizawl. She was incorporated as a master artisan by several Government agencies and non-profits. Lalduhkimi is now enabling other bamboo workers, including her two sons, to follow her path and break away from the cycle of poverty.

The economy of Mizoram stands at the intersection of poverty and abundance of bamboo resources. FMC with its project "Promote Bamboo MSME Clusters for Sustainable Development" is determined to leverage the heritage skills of the artisans, together with the vast renewable resource bank to eradicate poverty in the region. The case of Lalduhkimi signifies that the dual-pronged strategy of market and financial linkage can initiate a process of growth –leading to a paradigm shift in human development indicators, over a period of time, with the help of economic multipliers. The single catalyst to FMC's strategy is the perseverance and dedication of bamboo artisans like Lalduhkimi.



07

Gelhei Ray

Sambalpur, Odisha

Producing Tree Guards for Sambalpur’s Green Cover: Gelhei’s Story of Success through Adaptability

Case Study Overview

Products	Tree Guard	Gift Box
	Winnowing Tray	Basketry
Intervention Areas	Market Linkage	Financial Linkage
	Skill Training	-
Income Per Annum	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
	INR 20,000	INR 60,000
Beneficiaries	Direct	Indirect
	4 family members	8 artisans

For centuries, the Indian women folk have been a significant part of the bamboo ecosystem. Working in groups, large or small – bamboo craft was not only a means of livelihood but a community, in general, where these women exchanged ideas, techniques and much more. With its rich depository of bamboo resources, Odisha has many such female-driven clusters. Gelhei Ray, a woman in her late

40s, is one such artisan belonging to the Sambalpur bamboo cluster. She is a part of a group of woman artisans, who produced traditional bamboo basketry, mostly used in farming or local rituals.

FMC was conducting a baseline survey “Promote Bamboo MSME Clusters for Sustainable Development”, when the team came across Gelhei’s group of artisans. A shy lady, Gelhei attracted the team’s attention with her bamboo weaving skills. Her product line included winnowing trays, seeding baskets, and baskets for religious use. With such skill and product line, Gelhei could only fetch a meagre Rs 20,000 per annum. A diagnostic study revealed that the bamboo products had seasonal demand – mostly purchased during harvesting period or festivals. The immediate strategy would be to introduce products that had consistent demand, and accordingly upskill Gelhei’s group.

Once having one of the largest forest covers in Odisha, Sambalpur’s green cover was to be revived by the MoFCC over an extensive period of time. They would require large volumes of tree guards to be used for protecting the saplings, after plantation. Sensing opportunity, FMC soon mobilised Gelhei and her group – training them to produce tree guards of the required

specification. A working capital loan of Rs 20,000 was also arranged from Utkarsh Small Finance Bank. Gelhei, despite her age, and years of working with a particular set of products – quickly acquired the know-how to produce tree guards, efficiently and in volume. Soon she received her first batch of orders from an accredited supplier, and she got busy weaving the new product with the same agility.

This was just the beginning, as Gelhei improved her product line further, producing an array of packaging materials – which are used for product and gift packaging. Made of bamboo, these packaging materials were carbon-neutral – if adopted in mass, can help mitigate climate change. Her gift boxes caught on demand, and buyers flocked to order her products for marriage events.

From a seasonal worker, Gelhei is now a full-time bamboo artisan, with a consistent flow of income to the tune of Rs 300 per day. Opportunities for growth are endless, and with Gelhei's determination to climb away from poverty – the day is not far that Gelhei will become a bamboo entrepreneur – selling directly under her own brand and employing hundreds of artisans.



08

Chanchal Goswami

Dharmanagar, Tripura

Establishing a State-of-the-art Incense Stick Factory: Goswami's Story of Entrepreneurial Success

Case Study Overview

Products	Incense Stick	-
	-	-
Intervention Areas	Technical Support	Financial Linkage
	Skill Training	Market Linkage
Income Per Annum	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
	-	INR 12,00,000
Beneficiaries	Direct	Indirect
	15 workers	200 artisans

Chanchal Goswami's vision to establish his own incense manufacturing plant in Tripura. An expert with over 20 years of experience in the incense stick sector, Goswami provided training to government and non-government agencies in incense stick manufacturing and marketing. Having ample knowledge of the market, Goswami also used to trade incense sticks and

agarbattis from the local SHGs and small manufacturers. Goswami's vision was soon to be realised, as FMC agreed to assist him in setting up a modern incense stick manufacturing unit at Dharmanagar in North Tripura District of Tripura.

This industry uses bamboo stick as the primary raw material, on which the fragrant ignitable coat is applied. Bamboo stick making is an age-old tradition for rural artisans in Tripura, mostly women. Home to a large variety of bamboo plantation, the artisans obtain this green resource at a negligible cost. The culms of the bamboo poles are cleaned, then cut to length between nodes. These are then halved, slated and slivered to produce the sticks, to be used in incense industry. Goswami planned to value-add in this ecosystem, by setting up a plant that can machine-roll the ignitable coat onto these bamboo sticks. The finished products are to be then sold to established brands across various states in India.

One of the primary goals of FMC's project "Promote Bamboo MSME Clusters for Sustainable Development" is to establish small and medium enterprises in the cluster. Upon learning about Goswami's vision and experience, FMC proposed to technically assist him on a concept-to-commission basis. The technical and financial proposal was soon developed, and a loan of

Rs 30 lakhs was sanctioned from the bank. Goswami received 60 percent subsidy on the capital investment under the Government of India's Credit Linked Capital Subsidy scheme. Registering his firm under the name "Ankur Gramin Udyog", Goswami constructed a 750 square feet workshed, installing 9 fully automatic machines, which can bulk manufacture high-quality incense sticks. After successful trials, production began at Goswami's unit in 2020. The unit staff 15 full-time workers who work in shifts of 7-8 hours per day to achieve the production target.

With the government imposing higher import duty on incense sticks in 2020, a boom in demand is being experienced by manufactures like Goswami. FMC further helped him to market his products through an online portal, increasing his outreach to buyers across India. It is now a matter of time, that Chanchal Goswami's unit will be producing at full capacity. Goswami's dream did come true, and as he inspires hundreds in the region towards the path of entrepreneurship, FMC is prepared to shaping their dreams into reality.



09

Mukesh Mohli

Deogarh, Jharkhand

Empowering Woman SHGs of Deogarh: Mukesh’s Story of Driving Change through Aggregation

Case Study Overview

Products	Mirrors	Vases
	Small Furniture	Basketry
Intervention Areas	Skill Training	Financial Linkage
	Market Linkage	-
Income Per Annum	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
	INR 1,68,000	INR 7,20,000
Beneficiaries	Direct	Indirect
	20 artisans	80 artisans

The Shimla village in the Deogarh district of Jharkhand has witnessed an upsurge in activities for the past few months – thanks to Mukesh Mohli. A master bamboo artisan in his early 30’s, Mukesh regularly gathers the women artisans in groups, handing them their daily task – closely supervising as they weave modern utility items from thin slices of bamboo. The products, ranging from fruit

baskets, dustbins, laundry bins, gift baskets, and mats, would then be sold to regional markets or large buyers like ESAF Retail and Namaste Bamboo.

For centuries, Mukesh’s community – the Mohlis have been engaged in bamboo craftsmanship, utilising the rich abundance of Jharkhand’s natural bamboo forests to produce agricultural and household items like supas, dalis and tukris. Learning the craft from his father, Mukesh took to producing traditional bamboo items, selling them at the bi-weekly local markets. Earning Rs 14,000 a month, Mukesh remained ambitious of attaining a higher turnover -having known the true potential of this green resource. The traditional basketry had a dwindling demand and margin due to competition from plastic or similar materials. Post-attending several skill training workshops organised by the Government of Jharkhand, India, Mukesh’s confidence in bamboo was reinforced as he understood the profitability and scalability aspects of modern bamboo products. These products made of bamboo are similar in durability and utility as their plastic counterparts, without having any negative impact on the environment – the raw material being carbon neutral and available in abundance.

FMC with its project “Promote Bamboo MSME Clusters for Sustainable Development” was determined to promote design innovation, skilling and entrepreneurship in traditional bamboo clusters like that of Shimla, Deogarh. The team identified Mukesh during a workshop and the educated artisan was soon inducted as a crucial resource for the cluster’s development. Mukesh Mohli convinced the women artisans, including his wife to attend FMC’s skill training workshops, where he was engaged as a master artisan. With FMC’s support, Mukesh and the women artisans soon developed a range of modern bamboo products, mostly utility basketry – with a contemporary design. The products were a hit in the local market and FMC further linked Mukesh to large buyers like ESPCL, Namaste Bamboo and ESAF Retail.

From an artisan, Mukesh has moved up the value chain to become a trader – also actively involved in designing and production supervision. 2 women SHGs, having 20 artisans, crafts bamboo products for Mukesh, generating a monthly turnover of Rs 60,000. The surge in demand and production has not only boosted Mukesh’s income but have also empowered the women artisans who were previously dependant on low agricultural income. The women can now invest in their family’s welfare and save for medical emergencies. Mukesh, on the other hand, is planning for further growth with FMC’s support. He aims to bring more SHGs under the umbrella of the project, targeting an annual turnover of INR 25 lakhs. With the new source of sustainable income, Mukesh plans to tour the country, especially other bamboo clusters, with his wife. Mukesh Mohli’s story is proof that cluster development strategies can have a widespread impact on the lives of artisans, providing them with much-needed push to reach their true potential.



10 Judisha Myrthong

Mawsynram, Meghalaya

Producing Modern Amenity Products for Tourists: Judisha's Story of Utilizing Bamboo to Fight Poverty

Case Study Overview

Products	Water Bottles	Tiffin Baskets
	Tea Coasters	Gift Baskets
Intervention Areas	Design Innovation	Financial Linkage
	Skill Training	Market Linkage
Income Per Annum	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
	INR 12,000	INR 60,000
Beneficiaries	Direct	Indirect
	4 workers	6 artisans

Judisha Myrthong, a middle aged, bamboo craftsperson is no ordinary woman. Determined to change the fate of her family, and with FMC's support, Judisha climbed the ladder from a poverty-stricken artisan to an entrepreneur, now running her own business firm. Currently employing 4 workers in her firm, and producing a range of modern bamboo craftworks, Judisha's story is that of

perseverance in the face of severe hardship.

Residing in Mawsynram, Judisha had access to both raw materials and market – only deterrent being design knowledge and financial availability. Set in the East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya, Mawsynram attracts plenty of tourists for its scenic beauty and an all-monsoon climate throughout the year. These tourists, for years, have sustained the local bamboo craftspeople by purchasing souvenirs and utility products. Not keeping up with changing trends in design and utility, artisans like Judisha have not been able to attract buyers. Richly endowed with bamboo forests, raw material for these bamboo artisans is cheap and in plentiful supply. Certain non-clamp varieties of bamboo, found in abundance in this region, make the perfect raw material for modern amenity products. FMC's project "Promote Bamboo MSME Clusters for Sustainable Development" provided the essential push, in the form of skill upgradation and financial linkage, allowing Judisha and other artisans to effectively utilise the natural endowments of plentiful bamboo supply and a market, propelled by tourist demand.

Encouraged from an awareness workshop conducted by FMC, Judisha resolved to become bamboo entrepreneur. She started off by attending several training workshops, which exposed

her to an array of trendy designs and new products. With further handholding, Judisha was able to form her own firm *Nagroj Bamboo Enterprise* - producing modern amenity items like tea coasters, water bottle holders and tiffin baskets. The products caught demand in the local market and soon Judisha was busy fulfilling orders, with the help of 3-4 workers.

Within the span of a year, Judisha was able to contribute significantly towards her family expenditure – providing much needed support to her husband who was the sole earner in the family. The couple can now save for their child's higher education – which seemed like a distant dream a year back. Judisha's story is testament to the aspect of women empowerment in this bamboo cluster development initiative, inspiring other women to follow her path to success.



11 Phulkumari Hansda

Dumka, Jharkhand

Colourful Basketry for Pilgrims of Baba’s Dham: Phulkumari’s Story of Forging New Market Linkages

Case Study Overview

Products	Baskets for Religious use	
	-	-
Intervention Areas	Market Linkage	Skill Training
	Design Innovation	
Income Per Annum	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
	INR 25,000	INR 1,00,000
Beneficiaries	Direct	Indirect
	10 artisans	20 artisans

Situated on the Deogarh- Dumka highway in Dumka district of Jharkhand, the Baba Basukinath Dham is revered as the holiest of holy by the Hindus residing in eastern part of India. Thousands of pilgrim travel from far across to offer their prayers at this temple, especially during the monsoon month of *Shravan*. This period witnesses a peak in demand for small bamboo baskets, used for ritualistic

offering. Having inadequate capital, the local artisans fail to match the demand, giving way to plastic baskets as a possible alternative. The plight is similar in the rural utility-ware segment where plastic is replacing bamboo at a steady pace. The future looked bleak – for both the artisans and the environment.

During baseline survey for the project “Promote Bamboo MSME Clusters for Sustainable Development”, FMC understood the demand-supply gap and took to the path of capacitation to protect the livelihood of indigenous artisans, along with reducing the dependence on plastic. The tribal village of Sriwadhi, situated in the Shikaripada block of Dumka district, had the favourable ecosystem for strategic intervention. With 45 households practicing bamboo craft, the women were usually engaged in weaving while the men assisted with procuring and pre-processing of raw materials. 10 women artisans under the leadership of Phulkumari Hansda came forward to participate in the project. Through several workshops, the women were trained in scientific production techniques. It included advanced pre-processing techniques that made the bamboo both flexible, durable and fungi-free. They were trained on contemporary product design, which eventually helped the artisans weave baskets that had

aesthetic value along with utility. The female artisans also received tutelage on raw material sourcing methods, and order and inventory management.

A skilled artisan with entrepreneurial spirit, Phulkumari Hansda was on her toes forming a SHG with the other female artisans. Under Hansda's leadership, developed colourful baskets to be sold at Baba Basukinath Dham, prices ranging from Rs 75 to Rs 150. The bamboo baskets were an instant hit with the local retailers and orders poured in at Hansda's SHG. FMC further assisted Hansda and her group for obtaining working capital loan of Rs 12,000 each. Having a total of Rs 1,20,000 at their disposal, Hansda's SHG soon took to production. Their husbands came for support, helping them in procuring, slitting, slicing and chemically treating the bamboos.

These colourful *puja* baskets took the market by storm due to their modern design and attractive pricing – more orders poured in. Hansda and the other artisans now work 6 hours a day, 5 days a week fulfilling orders for the pilgrimage retailers. Their household income rose by 75 percent, to each household now earning close to Rs 350-400 per day. The income is expected to elevate further with Hansda's group trying to enter into the household utility segment, steadily developing contemporary products like laundry baskets, dustbins, etc along with traditional products like *supa*, *dali* and *tukri*.

Phulkumari Hansda's success is an inspiration to other women artisans in the cluster with FMC is eager to handhold them into forming similar SHGs, tapping into the vast market network for contemporary bamboo products. Such intervention will eventually lead to a self-sustaining bamboo cluster – eradicating poverty and mitigate climate change.



12 Dongche Yanik

Papum Pare, Arunachal Pradesh

Crafting Contemporary Utility Products from Bamboo: Lalduhkimi's Story of Success through Design Innovation

Case Study Overview

Products	Small Furniture	-
	-	-
Intervention Areas	Skill Training	Financial Linkage
	Market Linkage	-
Income Per Annum	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
	INR 2,88,000	INR 3,60,000
Beneficiaries	Direct	Indirect
	5 family members	6 artisans

For generations, tribal women across India have produced wares using bamboo – skilfully weaving thin layers of the slitted bamboo pole into objects of decoration or utility. They were in great demand across the region, especially during ceremonies. Overtime these earthy objects of minimalistic beauty lost way to mass-produced plastic ware. But in remote Yarkum village of Papum Pare district of

Arunachal Pradesh, one can still find the tribal communities' dependence on bamboo. In this hilly village, women like Dongche Yanik are engaged in crafting *Murhas*. Made of bamboo sticks, *Murhas* are small seating objects – that are durable and environment friendly. These *Murhas* are a popular finding in a north-eastern household, and with the rise of sustainable furnishing – *Murhas* can be spotted in commercial establishments and households across India. Producing the majority of *Murhas* in India, Yarkum women were barely able to keep up with the demand.

FMC with its project “Promote Bamboo MSME Clusters for Sustainable Development” is determined to leverage the heritage skills of bamboo artisans, together with the vast renewable resource bank to irradiate poverty. While conducting a baseline survey, the team came across the group of female artisans at Yarkum village. Dongche Yanik caught their attention due to her good communication skills, hardworking nature and leadership abilities. FMC's team soon imparted them with much-needed training especially in modern method of bamboo processing and treatment, and contemporary design techniques. FMC assisted Dongche Yanik and her fellow artisans to form a SHG, further helping them avail a micro-finance credit of INR 1 lakh for working capital requirement.

It was a golden opportunity for Dongche Yanik and the other artisans, who soon to producing *Murhas* at a larger scale, selling to local markets and even in Assam. The turnover increased from INR 288000 to INR 360000, with daily incomes rising significantly. Dongche Yanik was able to renovate her old bamboo house using her income from bamboo. The group is further trying to promote sales through online medium.

Standing at the intersection of poverty and resource abundance, FMC's dual pronged strategy of skill training and financial linkage gave the big push to the women of Yarkum in Arunachal Pradesh to achieve the impossible.



13 Neelam Patil

Betul, Madhya Pradesh

From Retailing Sarees to Trading Bamboo Products: Neelam’s Story of Embracing Opportunity

Case Study Overview

Products	Basketry	Home Décor
	Winnowing Pan	Utility Products
Intervention Areas	Market Linkage	Financial Linkage
	Skill Training	-
Income Per Annum	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
	INR 72,000	INR 6,00,000
Beneficiaries	Direct	Indirect
	3 family members	60 artisans

Neelam Patil, a mother of two and a saree retailer in her early 40s, had been persistent about sending her children to a good school and later on, to a college. Having received little education herself, she believed that higher education would enhance her children’s employment likelihood – pulling them out from the clutches of poverty. But given her meagre income from the saree shop, providing for

a good education was a distant dream - let alone provide for a good standard of living for her family. But fate took a leap as Neelam Patil got introduced to the trade of bamboo products.

Neelam’s shop-cum-residence was situated in the Amta municipality of Betul district in Madhya Pradesh. She would earn Rs 6000 per month selling sarees, suits and dress material. Betul also happens to be a bamboo cluster. For centuries, tribal artisans of Betul have been crafting utility and décor products from bamboo, procured from surrounding forests. Sensing opportunity, Neelam Patil started retailing bamboo basketry at her saree shop. This attracted locals and tourists to her shop, improving her monthly income. But with limited capital, she was able to stock products worth Rs 1500 to 2000 at a particular point of time. Sadly, she had to return customers who were looking for variety and range.

FMC in their project “Promote Bamboo MSME Clusters for Sustainable Development” had been in the search for entrepreneurs who are willing to trade bamboo products, increasing demand in the cluster – positively impacting the income of bamboo artisans. The team identified Neelam Patil due to her pre-existing retail infrastructure in the bamboo cluster, her hardworking nature and good communication skills. The team assisted Neelam in availing a

working capital loan of Rs 1,00,000 from Bandhan Bank, and facilitated both backward and forward integration – linking her with artisans, large traders and buyers. The team also trained her in contemporary designs and products, inventory management, marketing and basic accounting.

Neelam's trading business soon took off, supplying to local and regional markets in Bhopal, Indore, Balaghat and Nagpur. Her products include baskets and winnowing pan of various sizes, modern home décor items, and utility products. From a side-hustle, Neelam now dedicates her entire time and effort to bamboo – even constructing her own warehouse to stock the products in lean production season. Neelam earns more than Rs 50,000 per month during peak season and roughly Rs 10,000 per month during lean season, averaging Rs 5.5 to 6 lakhs per annum. Neelam procures from 60 artisans in the cluster providing them with stable income throughout the year. With the money earned, Neelam has invested in a provisional store, which is being run by her husband. She has admitted her children to a reputed school, sowing seeds for their better future. More traders and artisans are coming forward to participate in the project and FMC is ready to handhold each of them – improving on their lives and the economy as a whole.



14 Lalramthangi

Aizawl, Mizoram

From Daily Wage Worker to Bamboo Artisan: Lalramthangi's Endeavour to Tackle Poverty

Case Study Overview

Products	Mizo Hat	Basketry
	Utility Products	-
Intervention Areas	Skill Training	Financial Linkage
	Technology	Market Linkage
Income Per Annum	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
	INR 24,000	INR 1,20,000
Beneficiaries	Direct	Indirect
	3 family members	8 artisans

On a chilly afternoon of late 2018, Lalramthangi quickly counted the gains from the day's labour at the field. She was short of a considerable amount to buy her child a birthday present. Had she have received a similar wage than her male co-worker, she could have managed to purchase the gift- along with arranging a dainty feast for her family of four. Lalramthangi along with several women in

her district and several other parts of India are subject to gender wage gap, where the males receive relatively higher wages than females – both in skilled and unskilled domains. Work was irregular, and the days she managed to get hired – she would bring home no more than Rs 250.

FMC in its project “Promote Bamboo MSME Clusters for Sustainable Development” identified Lalramthangi during the baseline survey at her village of Edenther in Aizawl district of Mizoram. One of the project's aims had been to uplift and empower women across marginalised communities through skill training and value chain development, together by using the extensive local bamboo resources and existing cluster network. A potential candidate, Lalramthangi was soon invited to FMC's training workshop in early 2020. The workshop along with an extended hands-on training for 2 months, equipped Lalramthangi with the skills of bamboo craft including processing, treatment, weaving techniques and contemporary design. Within months, she was able to craft a variety of products from thin slices of bamboo. She started off with simple basketry later moving on to more complex products like modern décor items. FMC soon connected her with local buyers, especially

churches and handicraft retailers and further assisted her to obtain a loan of Rs 49,500 from North East Small Finance Bank.

Lalramthangi was soon supplying to 5 handicraft shops in Aizawl along with local churches. A lost tradition, she reproduced the Mizo hat with a contemporary touch and is the sole supplier in the district. Her popularity soared and she was soon inducted into the Edenther bamboo artisan's association, where she will have the scope of receiving bulk orders in future. She also displayed her products at Zohandco Exhibition in 2020, leading to further networking and orders.

Once a daily wage worker, Lalramthangi is now a self-dependant artisan – thanks to her induction into the bamboo value chain. Her income is more regular, and she could save a percentage for the unforeseen. Following Lalramthangi's footsteps, more women artisans from the cluster are participating in the bamboo craft– showing early signs of a robust cluster in the making.



15 Rakhis Behphatis

Pynursla, Meghalaya

From Agricultural Labour to Bamboo Artisan: A Story of Rakhis' Strive for Empowerment

Case Study Overview

Products	Tiffin Baskets	Water Bottles
	Tea Coasters	Basketry
Intervention Areas	Skill Training	Financial Linkage
	Technology	Market Linkage
Income Per Annum	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
	INR 14,400	INR 72,000
Beneficiaries	Direct	Indirect
	4 family members	4 artisans

Rakhis Behphatis, a tribal woman in her early 50s, had spent most of her life in the hilly fields of her village in Pynursla region of Meghalaya. Living on the edge of poverty, Rakhis would toil incessantly as an agricultural labour – earning Rs 300 a week. On lean seasons, she would spare her hand to broomstick production, bamboo basket weaving and

even beetle nut processing on certain occasions. Her income was barely enough to fetch a proper meal for her family of 5. She, with her family, lived in a rented house which required an array of repairs. Living conditions were poor, posing a plethora of health risks – especially during monsoons. A growing number of families in the region faced similar challenges.

Bamboo forests are found in plentiful in the Pynursla region, offering a renewable supply of non-timber material that can be utilised in producing a variety of objects -that is otherwise produced using timber or plastic. Objects made of bamboo are carbon neutral, and can potentially contribute to the nation's pledge in limiting global warming to 1.5 °C by 2070. FMC in its project "Promote Bamboo MSME Clusters for Sustainable Development" have leveraged bamboo as a sustainable resource in providing livelihood to marginalised communities across several states in India. Due to its abundance of bamboo forests and artisanal heritage, Pynursla was identified as a potential cluster. Pynursla had an existing ecosystem of bamboo craftwork, producing traditional basketry like *Khoh* (closed weave basket with head strap), *Shang* (shallow storage basket), *Khasi Pig Basket* (basket for transporting pigs), *Knup* (conical head gear), etc. The project's aim had been to uplift and strengthen the cluster by introducing

contemporary products/designs, creating pathway to new markets, and developing financial linkages.

Rakhis was identified by FMC during the baseline survey, and was inducted into the training sessions, where she acquired the skills to procure, process and weave bamboo into sellable products. With support from FMC, Rakhis developed samples of contemporary products like water bottles, tiffin baskets, large and small cones, tea coasters, and traditional basketry. The samples helped FMC to fetch initial round of orders from the Shillong market. She started fulfilling orders under the banner R.B. Bamboo Enterprise and FMC further assisted her to develop stamps, invoices, cash memos and marketing materials for her enterprise. She further hired a worker to assist her with the production. Selling products with a higher profit margin, her income jumped to Rs 1500 per week. Even at the age of 52, Rakhis is persistent on improving her income further, through marketing and higher production. Rakhis has initiated repairs of her roof and bathroom, with the higher income allowing for better living standards. Inspired by her success, more artisans are following Rakhis's path with FMC's handholding – transforming Pynursla into a prosperous bamboo cluster.

.



16

Giogi Yachung

Papum Pare, Arunachal Pradesh

Levering the Power of Online Marketplaces: Giogi's Story of Taking Bamboo Murhas to the World

Case Study Overview

Products	Small Furniture	-
	-	-
Intervention Areas	Skill Training	Financial Linkage
	Market Linkage	-
Income Per Annum	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
	INR 1,44,000	INR 3,60,000
Beneficiaries	Direct	Indirect
	8 family members	12 artisans

In the age of the internet, online marketplaces can establish a significant forward linkage for heritage artisan clusters, which were otherwise dependant on traditional market channels like traders, and retail networks. Such is the case of Giogi Yachung, an *Murha* artisan from the Takar village of Arunachal Pradesh. Previously earning a meagre income from

selling Murhas to the local traders, Giogi has established a sustainable revenue stream through online markets – selling to domestic and foreign customers.

Made of bamboo sticks, Murhas are small seating objects – that are durable and environment friendly. These Murhas are a popular finding in a north-eastern household, and with the rise of sustainable furnishing and online markets – Murhas can be spotted in commercial establishments and households across India and abroad. The Papum Pare district, where Takar is situated, accounts for majority of Murha production, with the women artisans barely able to keep up with the market demand due to their unorganised nature.

FMC with its project “Promote Bamboo MSME Clusters for Sustainable Development” is determined to leverage the heritage skills of bamboo artisans, together with the vast renewable resource bank to irradiate poverty. While conducting a baseline survey, Giogi Yachung caught their attention due to her hardworking nature, skill and adaptability. FMC's team soon imparted them with much-needed training especially in modern method of bamboo processing and treatment, and contemporary design techniques. FMC assisted Giogi Yachung to form a firm, further helping them avail a micro-finance credit for working capital requirement.

With the newly acquired skills, Giogi soon reinvented the age-old Murha into a contemporary product, producing stools, centre tables and furniture sets for the modern household. With FMC's support, Giogi enlisted her products to the online marketplace where she soon started receiving orders. FMC further linked her with markets in Itanagar, Naharlagun, Ziro, Palin, Koloriang, and even to neighbouring states like Assam and Meghalaya. Her income increased from INR 144000 to INR 360000, together with improved profitability due to better designs. Witnessing her success other women artisans are willing to follow her path, with online marketplaces fuelling cluster demand – taking their heritage products to the world.

