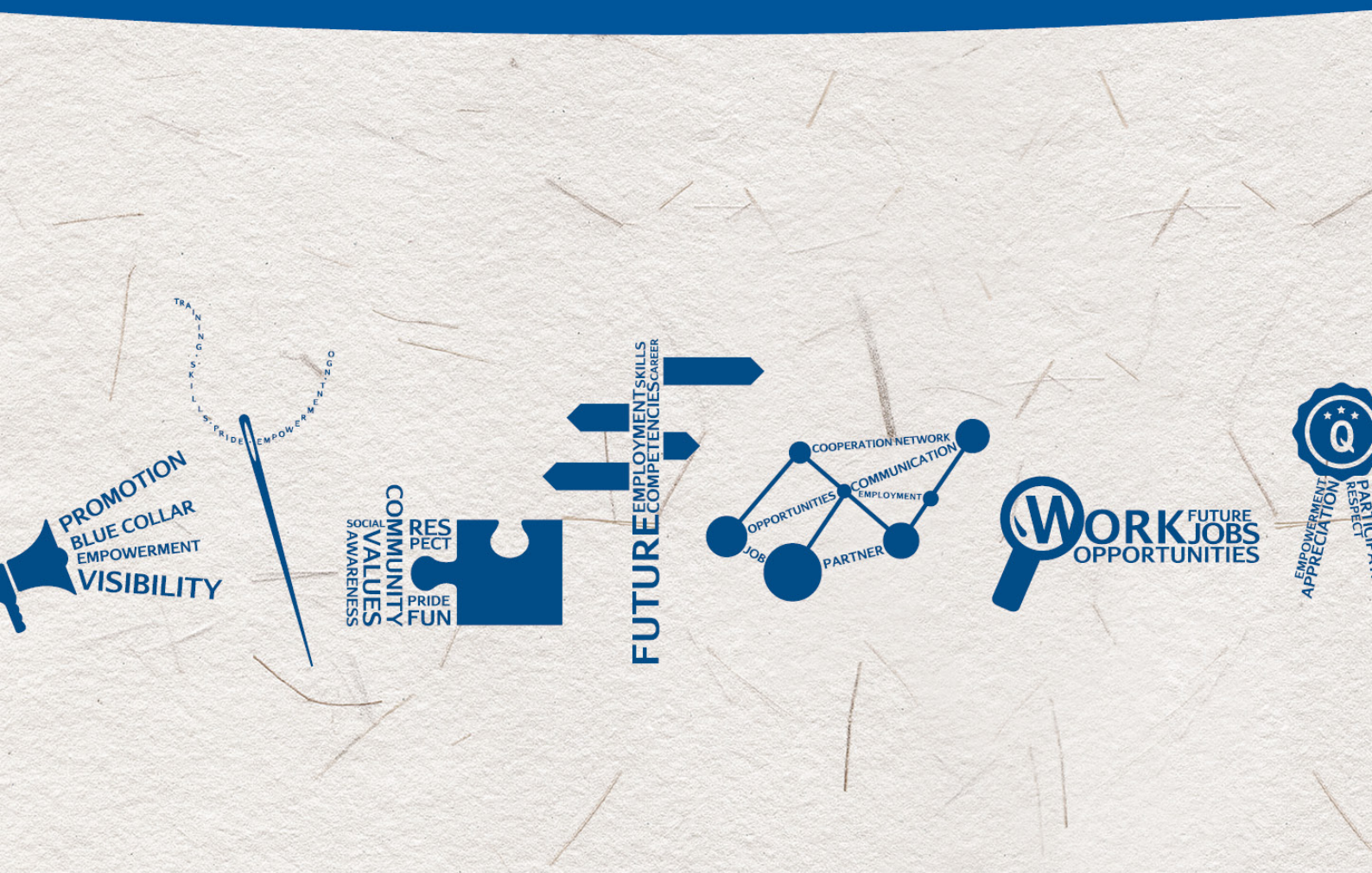




# 6.1 HOW TO REACH OUT TO AND MOBILISE WOMEN FOR HANDICRAFT WORK





# HOW TO REACH OUT TO AND MOBILISE WOMEN FOR HANDICRAFT WORK



## What Is It Useful For

This tool can be used to raise awareness about income opportunities for women in marginalised rural and urban areas in the handicraft sector, and to mobilise the local community in preparation of a joint initiative.



## When To Use

This tool is typically used to jointly identify suitable income opportunities for women in marginalised areas with the local community, in particular in rather traditional villages or informal urban areas, where cultural circumstances make it **difficult for women to leave their homes for work** purposes.

The tool can be applied in contexts where women generally dispose of basic or no education, no or only little professional / handicraft experience, limited access to job opportunities (which is further aggravated by cultural barriers to mobility, long distances to industrial areas / bigger cities and poor infrastructure) and have a strong preference for flexible work at home. At the same time, it can also be used in cases where women already generate a certain income (e.g. as owner of small shops) which is however not sufficient to cover even basic expenses. In such cases, the tool can be used to support women to diversify their income.



## How Long Does It Take

Approx. 3-4 months for trust-building, mobilisation, information meetings, identification of most suitable handicraft and legal set-up as well as kick-off workshop

TRAINING  
SKILLS  
PRIDE  
EMPOWERMENT  
NGO



## What Is Needed

- Project leader for community mobilisation, information meetings, identification of most suitable handicraft as well as legal set-up and kick-off workshop
- Financial and human resources for organisation of workshops and meetings



## Examples

The approach has been successfully applied in the handicraft textile sector in Fayoum, in Sinai as well as in Greater Cairo.

Tools 6.1 – 6.4 might also be applied in other sectors, where the required work fulfils the following criteria:

- Allows for homework at local level
- Has a culturally acceptable image
  - Is already known to a certain extent to the local community
  - Requires relatively low investment costs for required resources
  - Requires low to medium level of technical skills, which can be acquired rather easily



## WHAT TO DO

In order to achieve the above mentioned objectives, the following steps should be undertaken:



### 2

#### IDENTIFY A TRUSTWORTHY AND ACCEPTED PROJECT LEADER WITH A HANDICRAFT PROFILE

In the above mentioned environments, **trust and personal relationships** are key prerequisites for mobilising women. Therefore a trustworthy person is needed to be in charge of steering the overall process, closely monitoring the realisation of project activities, supporting the women in building up required capacities, assisting in design development, production, marketing and distribution of the handicraft products and contributing to trust-building measures towards community key players.

Even though external expertise might be mobilised for specific tasks, it is highly recommended to choose a **project leader who disposes of a professional background and network** in the handicraft sector. This will contribute to his / her reputation in the local community and will considerably ease the joint development and implementation of a business model based on his / her experience and networks.

Project experience proves that the **following key characteristics** are most crucial for this position: It should ideally be a woman (easier access to female inhabitants as key target group) and needs to be highly respected or even already trusted by the local community (men and women including key players). Ideally, s/he lives nearby for easy access to / for the community at any time.

In addition, the project manager's or external expert's background ideally includes a network of relevant customers / markets / distribution channels (at local level, in bigger Egyptian cities incl. Cairo and – if applicable – on an international level). This is crucial to assure that the products will be sold later on (see also [tool 6.4](#)).

Again, suitable project leaders can be identified through NGO networks, local activists, local administrations, project reports and records of trainings / events of relevant development projects etc.

### 1

#### IDENTIFY SUITABLE COMMUNITIES WHICH HAVE ALREADY EXPRESSED THEIR INTEREST IN INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES IN PARTICULAR FOR WOMEN

Project experience proves that villages, urban informal areas and / or local women networks which are actively searching for opportunities to enhance their income have significantly higher chances to succeed in such a project. In such cases, participation rates in project related activities are considerably higher (i.e. in training and production) and it is more likely that a suitable income generation model will be developed and implemented.

Such areas / networks can be identified through NGO networks, local activists, local administrations, project reports and records of trainings / events of relevant development projects etc.

The actual selection of the most suitable community can be based upon a series of indicators, which should certainly include the actual level of motivation of the women and the existence of dedicated community key players.

### 3

#### ORGANISE A FIRST EXPLORATORY MEETING WITH COMMUNITY WOMEN AND MEN

During such a meeting, the expectations of the women and men, preliminary ideas and potential opportunities for income generation in the handicraft sector should be jointly explored in order to ensure ownership.

This meeting will be an excellent opportunity to find out more about the actual level of motivation and the prospective degree of participation among community inhabitants for project activities. Potential challenges might be identified as well, such as doubts of relevant decision makers, influential family heads etc. At the same time, opportunities arising from such projects and realistic estimations on required resources and timeframes should be discussed as well.

In principle, such discussions should be undertaken in an open and trustworthy way in order to build confidence and to allow for an informed decision on both sides.

To this end, a maximum level of participation should be ensured and a highly interactive approach should be chosen in order to obtain as much information as possible and to spread out to large parts of the area's inhabitants. If expression of opinions in larger groups proves to be rather difficult, it is advisable to take into consideration other methods of exploration, such as working groups, individual interviews etc.

Based on this assessment, **both sides can take an informed decision**, whether such a project in this particular community has a high likelihood to succeed or not.

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SUPPORT



## WHAT TO DO

In order to achieve the above mentioned objectives, the following steps should be undertaken:

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### FURTHER INFORMATION AND ORIENTATION MEETINGS

Once both sides have taken a decision to jointly undertake the project, further meetings will become necessary. In the framework of these meetings, more details can be discussed with key actors, i.e. which products the women would like to produce, how much time they can invest for training and production, would they be interested in jointly developing the design of the products and where training could take place. The meetings can also be used to discuss potential challenges and identify solutions with community internal and external resources.

Ideally, a project objective should jointly be defined as a basis for further planning of project activities.

Again, interactive methods should be used to ensure that all voices can be heard and will be included in further discussions.

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### KICK-OFF EVENT

As a symbolic starting point, it is highly recommended to organise an attractive kick-off event. This will add to more visibility of the project in the community, thus generating even higher levels of support and backing for the women. This is the moment where the overall community, whether active or passive (e.g. husbands), can be fully bought into the idea and their support can publicly be ensured.

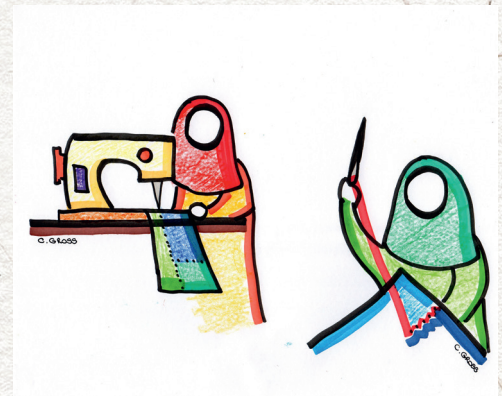
Elements of such an event could be a joint snack in the community hall / other suitable public locations, presentation of broad outlines of the project, displaying potential sample products by the project leader, examples of handicraft work already produced by the women and / or local handicraft traditions and the like. Again during this event the jointly developed project objective will be communicated and commended.



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QUALITY EMPLOYER







## WHAT TO OBSERVE

The following lessons learnt should be observed:

It is vital to identify **key players** (e.g. religious leaders, community elders, reputable families) as they have a decisive influence on the successful mobilisation of the community. Through trust-building measures, they can become important change agents for the implementation of the project.

It is highly recommended to **suggest an income generation activity which has a high esteem** among the community. This will considerably enhance levels of motivation and participation.

In more conservative communities, **concerns might be expressed about the mobility of women linked to the income generation activity**. One key argument in this regard should be that once the training is completed, production can be done at home.

The project's aims and methodology should fit with **local cultural norms and work expectations**. Again, this will lead to considerably higher acceptance and participation rates. This could for example include adaptation of all measures to local cultural settings and rhythm (i.e. workshop hours in women's free time 10 am – 2 pm), a focus on home work and trainings in different homes (in case of Training of Trainers).

It is vital to assure the **backing of the male inhabitants of the area**. Without their support, the participation levels will remain low. One way to do so is to think of including men into the project (for logistics, as drivers).

It is highly recommended to **select communities or networks where women already have previous experience** in designing, producing and selling handcraft products. In this case, the project could provide support and advice in further technical training and / or product design and / or product distribution and will also serve as strong motivator.

As a motivation, **reference can be made to well-known success stories i.e. in neighbouring villages / areas**, and representatives of such initiatives can be invited to inform about opportunities and benefits.

Make sure you have a **sustainable and long-term overall perspective** before approaching a local community. In many cases, they deal with desperate working conditions and are urgently looking for income generating activities. Short-term interventions without an overall concept for selling products on the long run will only create hopes which cannot be fulfilled. This also refers to a realistic market assessment (see [tools 6.3](#) and [6.4](#)).

**Mobilise a large number of women for the subsequent training and production activities** (i.e. a minimum of 30 women, see also [tool 6.2](#)). This approach will assure higher visibility, allow for work sharing among women, combining different levels of technical skills among women, organising joint working sessions and will generally add to a positive dynamics and mutual motivation among the female community members.

When **organising workshops in marginalised areas**, be aware of the fact that the participants (women and men) have few or no experience with such formats. Thus, try to keep it simple and do not overwhelm participants with too much content. At the same time, make sure you have a strong person steering the process and leave enough room for exchange and communication.

For the selection of the project leader, it will be most important that s/he has **excellent management / steering and communication skills**. Any other expertise can be covered by external experts.

