



Dining For Women Program Completion Report
"Designing Change, Stitch by Stitch"

Presented with Gratitude by Anchal Project

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Organization Name: Anchal Project

Program Title: Designing Change, Stitch by Stitch (DCSS)

Grant Amount: \$49,337.00

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Goals:

Anchal's goal is to address the exploitation of women around the world by using design thinking to create employment opportunities, services and products that support economic empowerment.

The program *Designing Change, Stitch by Stitch (DCSS)* aimed to provide thirty-five (35) commercial sex workers (CSW) in Ajmer, India with economic opportunities. Through design training and alternative careers in textiles, *DCSS* proposed to offer the women a holistic program that created long-term solutions to break out of the perpetual cycle of exploitation.

Findings and Overall Outcomes:

Dining for Women's generous funding of forty-nine thousand three hundred thirty-seven dollars (\$49,337.00) has transformed the lives of hundreds and elevated the status of whole communities. With from the Dining For Women community, we have employed over ninety(90) women – sixty (60) of which work full-time as Anchal artisans. This is over two times the number of women that we hoped to employ.



Image 1: Anchal Artisans in Ajmer during design workshops in November 2013.

All of Anchal's artisans are empowered through design training, health benefits, education workshops and financial security. Our multi-dimensional program gives them the opportunity to support themselves and their families through healthy, meaningful work and sustain a life outside of the commercial sex trade.



Image 2: Artisans learning the color wheel during a design workshop taught by Co-Founder, Colleen Clines, in February 2013.

The impact that the DFW funding has made is measureable in the growth of our artisans and their families who are eternally grateful. To date, we have tracked the improvements in these areas:

- Income – Increases by 30%-50%.
- Savings – Artisans save an average of 15% of their total income, up from 0%.
- Education – Children of Anchal artisans are now 90% more likely to go to school.
- Health Services – 100% of artisans and their families have access to healthcare.
- Food – 60% increase in food consumption.

The most significant impact from our program is the most difficult to measure, but is undeniable in the presence of Anchal artisans: the restoration of confidence and self-worth.

Anchal artisan, Nazia, recently shared that "Before Anchal I was not able to do anything. My confidence was very low and I can't face people but after the association with Anchal I proud of myself and I can do what I want to do. One thing is very important that Anchal is working for marginalized sex workers community. We would pray that this organization grow and grow. So that many like us can benefited from Anchal."



Image 3: From Left to Right - Artisans Nazia, Kamala and Santosh with Anchal Project Manager, Kusum.

The steady improvement in these key subjects is what signifies true empowerment. Our initiative demonstrates that when we systematically address employment inequality, we can reduce the number of women reliant on the sex trade and allow them to achieve their full potential.

Jaimala Gupta, Co-Founder of Vatsalya & Anchal's partner shares this about the program:

"Anchal is a very transparent organization, high on ethics and very committed to the betterment of this extremely exploited and abused community. They not only provide training and livelihood opportunities, they invest very sincerely in transforming lives of these women. Almost 30% women have left the sex trade after being engaged by Anchal and about strong 40% are almost at the edge of leaving this profession and entering a dignified life. Anchal invests very keenly in creating a friendly and conducive atmosphere to help these women think and express freely. Transitioning from the commercial sex trade to an alternative means of livelihood is an extremely tough decision leading to several complex situations threatening the well being of these women and therefore, it takes a lot of counseling and a safe nurturing environment for them to take those big steps. The project very much invests in that process. The program and the program director has a very clear and focused vision of transforming them as best as possible to live with dignity and independence."

The growth of our program hasn't come without challenges. Many of them stem from working with commercial sex workers. Addressing the need among commercial sex workers is unique in that the community already has access to money – quick money. Thus, their choice to make change is driven more by status than by income. Anchal offers a new, sustainable lifestyle but it is

not immediate and the change is not contingent solely on alternative employment. Additionally, CSW's are an extremely vulnerable population. Developing a trusting relationship is vital to work together and move forward.

During our trip to India in February, we decided to pilot a small program in Jaipur's red light district in addition to our program in Ajmer. We trained 30 women, rented a workshop space, and provided full-time positions to 12 apprentices. During the subsequent months, the women struggled with fully committing to the project and we found it difficult to establish the necessary, trusting relationship. Ultimately this led us to close the program in Jaipur after 8 months.

Additionally, Jaipur did not previously offer health or counseling by our partner NGO. There were no existing mental healing established or trust built with the women, making it very difficult to begin with an economic initiative. We learned that in addition to the assistance of local leadership and infrastructure, health and counseling services are critical to implement at the creation of a program and prior to job alternatives are offered.

Budget:

ITEM	BUDGET	ACTUAL
PERSONNEL		
Artisans	\$32,760.00	\$27,054.00
Project Manager	\$1,460.00	\$2,115.00
Assistant Project Managers	\$2,190.00	\$1,284.00
Master Tailor	\$2,920.00	\$1,407.00
INFRASTRUCTURE		
Workshop space & Utilities	\$4,380	\$2,717
Tea and snacks for artisans		\$1,297
Materials for product		\$2,735
Equipment (2 sewing machines, scissors, needles, measuring tapes)	\$366	\$366
EDUCATION		
Educational Workshops	\$888.00	\$888.00
VOCATION		
Design Training	\$1,145.00	\$1,750.00
Trip to India x 2 (January 2013)	\$1,500.00	\$2,816.00
Trip to India x 3 (October 2013)	\$1,500.00	\$4,119.00
HEALTH		
Routine medical check-ups	\$100.00	
Health Workshops	\$128.00	\$800.00
TOTAL	\$49,337.00	\$49,348.00

The major difference in our budget includes the estimate it took to support each individual artisan. With surplus funds and changes in the exchange rate, we were able to support over twice the number of women we had planned!

We also added a second trip to India in October 2013. This trip included Executive Director Colleen Clines, Tricia Bendik of Urban Outfitters and professional photographer David Matysiak. This trip was designed to improve our expanded operations, welcome additional women into the program, monitor the progress, document artisan stories and conduct design workshops. The trip also coincided with Dining for Women's visit to the workshop space in November!

Our relationships with the artisans and our partners on the ground are our first priority and because 2013 was such a dynamic year for Anchal, we wanted to provide full support to our partners and the artisans. Through our time spent in India, the U.S. team could help address any challenges or concerns through the implementation of DCSS.



Image 4: Left, David Matysiak filming the kantha quilting process. Right, Tricia Bendik teaching embroidery techniques and vest tailoring to artisans.

During this trip we were lucky enough to meet DFW members, introduce them to the artisans and work together on the ground. The DFW members got to know the artisans personally and witness the very direct impact that the DFW funding has made in the lives of Anchal artisans. The group quickly bonded with the artisans through their art, story-telling and laughter. The feeling of women coming together and combining resources to create real, concrete, sustainable changes was indescribable and we will never forget it.



Image 5: Co-Founder & Executive Director, Colleen Clines, with New Anchal artisans in November 2013.



Image 6: Dining for Women visiting Anchal artisans.

One member of DFW, Tina, shared a conversation that she had with one of our artisans on her blog:

"One of the women's daughters is now doing post-graduate work and her granddaughters are still in private school—which wouldn't have been possible, if her mother was still in the sex trade business. It's a matter of stigma, not cash. If your mother is a sex worker, your status is lower than low—and your chances of being accepted into a good school are almost nil. One woman shared that she was orphaned at 11 and married shortly afterward to a man 16 years her senior. She's now the outreach project manager and has a good eye for women in need that want to make a change..."

Tina's thoughtful insight shared a part of Anchal that is not measured by numbers or dollars. While employment and economic stability is at the core of our program, the women are empowered not only by financial security but also through the creation of meaningful work and the ability to provide opportunities for their daughters.

Also, for the first time, the artisans met women who were purchasing their products. The smiles, joy, and pride the artisans' displayed when standing next to the DFW member that purchased her work was truly incredible. They could not stop talking about how exciting it was to meet the group and how proud they felt.

To read more personal accounts on the impact DFW visit had on our artisans, read co-founder Colleen's reflection. <http://anchalproject.org/dining-for-women-meet-anchal-artisans/>



Image 7: Dining for Women member, HC Conyers and senior artisan Santosh holding her quilt that HC purchased.

Sustainability:

Anchal artisans currently earn 30%-50% more than they did prior to joining Anchal and have the opportunity to advance into a leadership position where they can earn closer to 70% more.

It is proven when women earn and control an income, they are 90% more likely than men to invest the money back into areas integral to development such as shelter, safety, food health, and their children's education. Anchal artisans are no exception. As a result, they are steadily lifting the status of their families, communities and nation as a whole.

Additionally, in October of 2013, all of Anchal's artisans pledged to support their daughter's education and keep them away from the exploitative profession. This commitment is decreasing the amount of intergenerational prostitution and we expect it to keep decreasing on a steady basis. This makes Anchal both an interventionist and preventative program.

As a result of this grant, we trained over 75 women in design and kantha quilt making. As the word spreads and the greater CSW community in Ajmer sees artisans earning a new income, Anchal's waiting list grows. The 90 women currently enrolled in the program will help train an estimated 30 new women per year. Therefore, Anchal expects to directly touch the lives of over 210 women with full-time jobs by 2017.



Image 8: Project Assistant, Shakuntela, and her daughter, Parthi, wearing the didi scarf her mother created.

Women and Girls Served:

The power of DFW's impact is evidenced most tangibly in Nita, a senior artisan and project assistant. Nita was married at a young age and left her husband after years of abuse. Because of her limited education and lack of transferable skills, she joined the commercial sex trade. Nita has now been with Anchal Project for four years where she has excelled in design training and created beautiful, marketable pieces. She has taken advantage of Anchal's workshops in financial planning and saved enough money to move out of the slum and purchase a home in a new neighborhood where she is no longer stigmatized for her previous life as a sex worker.



Image 9: Colleen Clines, Anchal's Co-Founder, with Nita and the home she purchased with her earnings from Anchal. November 2013

The lives of Anchal artisans are not only economically improved, they are enriched by the prospect of higher education. With her income from Anchal, Shakuntela can now afford her daughter's private school education. Sultana's daughter is now doing post-graduate work and her granddaughter's are in private school. Anchal Project breaks the continuous cycle of commercial sex work and the once inevitable pattern of intergenerational prostitution. In our most recent trip to India, 100% of Anchal artisans pledged to keep their daughters out of the exploitive trade and invest instead in their education.

One such artisan, Nasine, is a hardworking mother of four from an extremely impoverished background who was struggling to put food on the table and care for her sick husband. She enrolled in Anchal's training program and quickly started creating a variety of beautiful products. When she received her first paycheck she broke into tears before she even knew the amount. She later expressed that she had never seen such a large amount of money much less received it. Proud to call herself an Anchal artisan, Nasine is now economically independent and can provide for her family.



Image 10: Anchal artisan, Nazia, with her son.

While many of the differences that Anchal artisans have made in their lives are obvious, others are not. In our last trip to India we asked all of the women what difference Anchal employment has made in their lives. Nazia responded simply and proudly that with Anchal she is now able to buy fruit for her son. Prior to Anchal, fruit was an unaffordable luxury and Nazia would carefully navigate around the fruit aisle at the local market so that her son wouldn't be tempted by what she couldn't give him. Hearing Nazia's tale was a raw, honest, and above all, humbling moment. Our prior perceptions on change were contingent solely on materialistic, economic changes in the lives of women. What Nazia's sense of accomplishment taught us, is that the change in day-to-day life can encompass the difference in perception of what constitutes poverty.

New Opportunities:

Dining for Women funds allowed Anchal Project to collaborate with Urban Outfitters to create a one-of-a-kind, eleven-piece collection, Anchal x Urban. Urban Outfitters is an American retail chain that spans more than two hundred stores in the United States, Canada, and Europe. A "niche" brand, Urban Outfitters prides itself on its "ability to understand [its] customers and connect with them on an emotional level."

Each piece of the extraordinary collection contains portions of hand-sewn quilts, crafted from vintage saris by Anchal's talented artisans. A percentage of the proceeds from each Anchal x Urban sale supports Anchal's effort to provide women with economic independence. Currently, the collection is featured in ten Urban Outfitter's stores, on their website and promoted by Anchal via our website, blog, newsletter, Instagram, Twitter and in a fashion show in Louisville, KY.



Image 11: Anchal x Urban Renewal Collection with Urban Outfitters

This collaboration boosted Anchal’s national profile and helped us reach a younger demographic. Additionally, it allowed us to support even more women than we originally anticipated. Anchal artisan Nezma shared that this opportunity provided the artisans with “the ability to stand on their own feet and meet their expenses on their own, without borrowing from others.”



Image 12: Anchal x Urban Renewal Fashion Show in Louisville, KY. Maggie & Colleen Clines, Jaimala Gupta from Vatsalya, and runway models wearing the collection.

None of this would have been possible without the support of Dining For Women. Following the fashion show, Colleen Clines traveled to Ajmer for six weeks where she reunited with senior artisans, welcomed new artisans and conducted design workshops. Colleen noticed that "more than ever there [was] a mutual recognition of accomplishment, empowerment, and pride in where we have come in three years together."



Image 13: Artisans looking at photos of the Collection with designer, Tricia Bendik.

Dining For Women has been instrumental in recognizing Anchal as a sincere, legitimate, non-profit committed to empowering women in the developing world. As Executive Director Colleen Clines shared with DFW in a letter, "Dining for Women was the first organization to truly believe in us and the program funding provided by your members will forever change the lives of the women involved."

Since Dining for Women, Anchal has been able to secure grants through Google One Today, Google Adwords, Forix Foundation and Circle of Sisterhood.

Organizational Information:

Anchal has not experienced significant change in staffing—we have added a Development Coordinator and a Marketing Coordinator in the United States. Co-founder Devon Miller no longer plays an active role as an Anchal staff member, however, she still remains involved on the Board of Directors. We have not lost any NGO affiliations, partners, or funding.

Our organization, staffed 100% by women, reflects our commitment to empowering women and girls.

We have learned a great deal about the functionality of our program as a result of the new growth from this grant. By adding new artisans, we quickly realized that certain protocol, logistics, and reporting needed to be implemented quickly. This could be anything from production schedules to

monthly artisan reports or even expanding management responsibilities. We are constantly trying to improve operations to better our impact, increase awareness and support our artisans' journey to freedom. Anchal has recently hired additional project management in India to better support artisans and improve product quality.

Next Steps:

While Anchal has accomplished a significant amount with the DFW funding, there is still a lot to be done. Today, women represent a disproportionate percentage--70%--of the world's poor. UNIFEM describes this *growing* inequality as "the burden of poverty borne by women, especially in developing countries".

This concept is not only a consequence of lack of income, but is also the result of the deprivation of capabilities and gender biases present in both societies and governments. In addition to the unequal access to food, medicine, education or employment, this also includes the poverty of choices and opportunities, such as the ability to lead a long, healthy, creative, life and enjoy basic rights like freedom, respect, and dignity.

Anchal Project is more determined than ever to combat this phenomenon and avail our resources to more women. As DFW understands, all women have the right to live up to their full potential and pursue a happy and healthy life. Currently, we have 45 commercial sex workers on a waiting list eagerly hoping to be Anchal artisans. Not to mention the millions of women in India trapped in the commercial sex trade. Our next step is to expand our resources to our current community and offer them the opportunity that they both need and deserve.

Anchal intends to continue developing the kantha-quilting program, in addition to pursuing new opportunities for women to learn a new expertise in the textiles industry. We plan to pilot a natural dye project where we will train women to grow the dye plants, harvest the material and use it to dye the textiles. Not only will this give new job options to women not interested in sewing, but will also open new sales channels for Anchal's products. Additionally, we plan to strengthen our design training program and education workshops to ensure that Anchal remains a sustainable program.

As Hillary Clinton said in her 2013 speech at the Women's World Summit Conference, "Women are agents of change, we are drivers of progress, we are makers of peace... all we need is a fighting chance."

Thank you Dining for Women Members!