

**SOCIAL AUDIT**

**Creative Handicrafts**

**Draft Social Accounts**

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2001 – 31<sup>ST</sup> March 2003**

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## **1 Introduction**

Creative Handicrafts has been involved in the development of women and children for the last 19 years as a project and 9 years as an organization (it was registered only in 1994). It was felt by the board members and the members of the organization that it was high time that we looked at the organization, its performance over the years, its efficiency in finding sustainable solutions to the ever imposing problem of livelihood, its process of empowerment of women to build a sustainable society, etc. Hence, an evaluation of the project was on the cards.

However, at that stage it was unanimously felt that the evaluation of the organization should be carried out by an external evaluator. It is at this juncture that the director of the organization attended a workshop on social accounting and audit organized by COMMACT INDIA foundation. This workshop brought to the forefront that there is another way of evaluating the organization and its performance through social accounting and audit. This was suggested to the Board of Creative Handicrafts and they agreed to this form of an evaluation to add value to the objectivity of the whole process of evaluation.

As a result, Mr. John Pearce from COMMACT UK was requested to assist us in conducting a social audit of our organization. The process of social audit began in February 2001.

## **2 History and Background**

The history of Creative Handicrafts begins from a spark, the spark of an idea, that happened to Sr. Isabel Martin, a Spanish missionary of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Christ Jesus. It is this spark of an idea that helped rekindle the flames of life of families of small communities in the Slums of Mahakali Caves in Mumbai, India.

The history of Creative Handicrafts takes us back to the days in 1984 when Sr. Isabel Martin reached Mumbai from Poona after the completion of her assignment as the Novice Mistress. She wanted to work for the poor men and women of the slum communities. She then joined Jeevan Nirvaha Niketan (JNN), a project of the Trust, Maharashtra Kalyan Seva Mandal. JNN had been striving to impart non-formal education to the school dropouts of the slum communities. For Sr. Isabel this was an eye opener to the harsh realities that existed in the slum communities.

The next step for Sr. Isabel was to stay in the slum communities to experience the lives of the people in general and women in particular. She lived for 10 years in the slum communities like anyone of them, standing in line for a bucket of water, using the common toilets, managing all affairs in just one room. During all this while she continued to work for the women.

During her association with JNN and stay in the slum communities she was brought in close contact with mothers of the children of JNN and the slum communities. She found that the husbands of the women are irresponsible in providing economic and social respite to their families causing serious economic and social problems. Many of these men are victims of one or other social evils like alcoholism, wife abuse, etc. Women often become helpless in this kind of a situation. They try to add to the economy of the family by engaging in odd jobs and by working as domestic servants, which is another avenue of exploitation. There were and still are many women, in the slum communities who were deserted, widowed or divorced. Economic self sufficiency and freedom was the need of the hour.

This is the context in which the entire idea (the spark) for starting a Women's Self Employment Center for needy and interested and enterprising women of these slum communities originated. The next step was to create and sustain an interest among these women and to make them believe in themselves that they can earn a constant and decent livelihood by producing something on their own. So with two women and Sr. Isabel, they started training in producing garments and began producing. However, they did not obtain much share in the market as the market was flooded with garments and at highly competitive prices.

Being an artist, Sr. Isabel had the necessary knowledge to design and create soft toys and other handicrafts. So they began training and production of toys and handicrafts. Thus the Women's Self Employment Center found a niche for itself in the local and international market. The local market was interested in the toys and the international market mostly was interested in the handicrafts. It took six months for them to begin the first Co-operative of Women. In 1984 the first Co-operative Society was established. In a few years the demand for training among the women increased and many more women were interested in joining hands with the women of the Self Employment Center. A few women from a far away slum, Jeri Meri, came to Creative Handicrafts asking CH to help them establish a Co-operative there. Today this is the Center that produces the maximum.

In a few years the number of women and cooperatives increased at an alarming rate. The need of the hour was to register the Self Employment Center as an independent organization. All these years the activities were carried out under the auspices of Maharashtra Kalyan Seva Mandal (a registered Charitable Trust). As the activities increased rapidly it became important that the Self Employment Center be registered as a separate organization. Thus 1994 was an important year for the organization. The organization was re-christened from Women's Self Employment Center to Creative Handicrafts. It was Registered under the Bombay Public Trust Act and the Societies Registration Act in 1994.

Since then the organization has grown in leaps and bounds. Up to then the organization was concentrating more on its Economic Development Program. However, since then it realized that the organization needs to work with the community as a whole and not just with the women alone. Thus Creative Handicrafts began venturing into the field of primary education, primary health, sponsorship program for education of children, saving and credit groups for women, adult education etc.

Today the organization takes pride in that spark that occurred 16 years ago. It takes pride in the fact that it helps kindle the fire of many kitchens of the slum communities.

## The Organisation

**Members:** All the members of the organization are women. A few male staff members are hired for their professional qualification. All the members hail from different religious background but the majority belong to the Hindu religion as the majority in India are Hindus. The women who are members were mostly illiterate and unskilled. Creative Handicrafts admits, trains and gives membership to only disadvantaged women.

**Criteria for recruitment:** There are two kinds of people in the organization: the Members, the women of the organization, and the administrative staff at the head office. The criteria for recruitment of women are: they should be unskilled and disadvantaged and looking for a means of living. By disadvantaged we mean that they are victims of some kind of atrocities or extremely poor. Most of our women are victims of one or other kind of social evils. Many have been deserted by husbands, divorced or are widows. The administrative staff of the organization are hired on the basis of their skills and academic qualification, commitment to social work and previous experience. They are both male and female members.

There are 150 full time members (full time working at our production centers), 50 women in home projects and 25 administrative staff which includes the staff of our community development programs.

The Saving and Credit Program initiated by Creative Handicrafts among the women of the slum communities and the tribal women in Arey colony has a membership of 500 women.

### CREATIVE HANDICRAFTS:ORGANOGRAM

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The **General Assembly** is comprised of all the women who are members of Creative Handicrafts. Women who join the production centers (7 self help groups for handicrafts and one for catering) become a member after one year of service. Thus all the women are members of Creative Handicrafts and thus members of the general assembly. The general assembly is the highest policy making body of the organization. Hence, the women of Creative Handicrafts are the owners of the organization. The general assembly is held once a year.

The general assembly elects 12 of its members as **trustees** of the organization. They meet every three months to review and make policies for the organization. The trustees are elected for a period of three years and could be re-elected for a similar term. The trustees elect a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary and a treasurer.

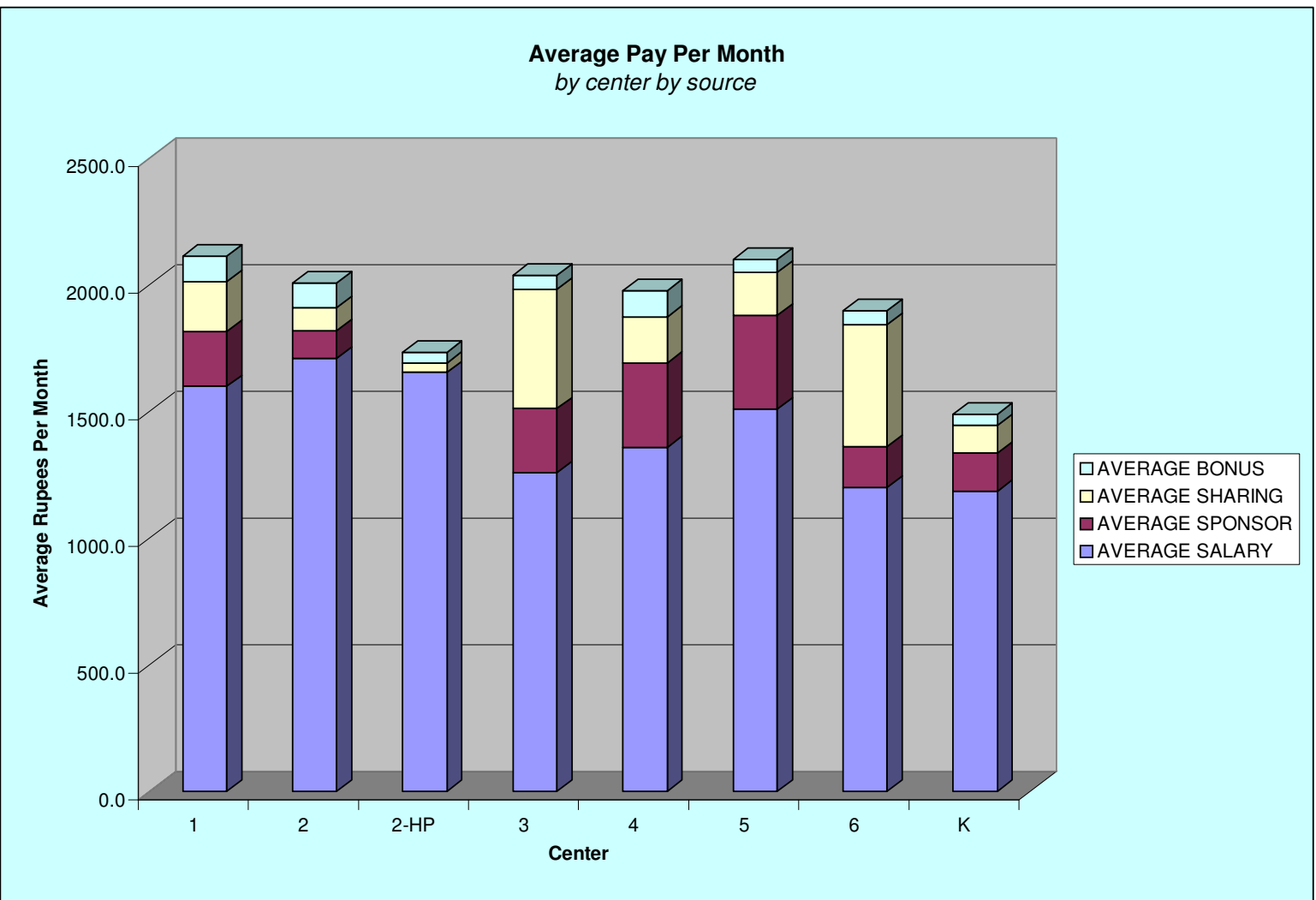
The **Director** is the functional head of the organization. Presently, Mr. Johny Joseph is the director of the organization.

The **community development program** has two professional social workers and other support staff who look after each of the projects.

The **economic development program** has 8 centers (Self help groups) where production is done. Each center has an in-charge and an accountant to supervise production and financial matters. The centers are supported by the head office with quality controllers, designers, marketing and sales personnel and secretarial staff.

The community development programs are aimed at supporting the women to make their lives easier. They include the sponsorship program for the children of the women, crèche for the children and the study center for school going children.

The average monthly income of women in the production centers is given in the chart below. The number below form 1 to 6 indicates the centers of production, K indicates the project "Asli foods" and 2HP indicates home project.

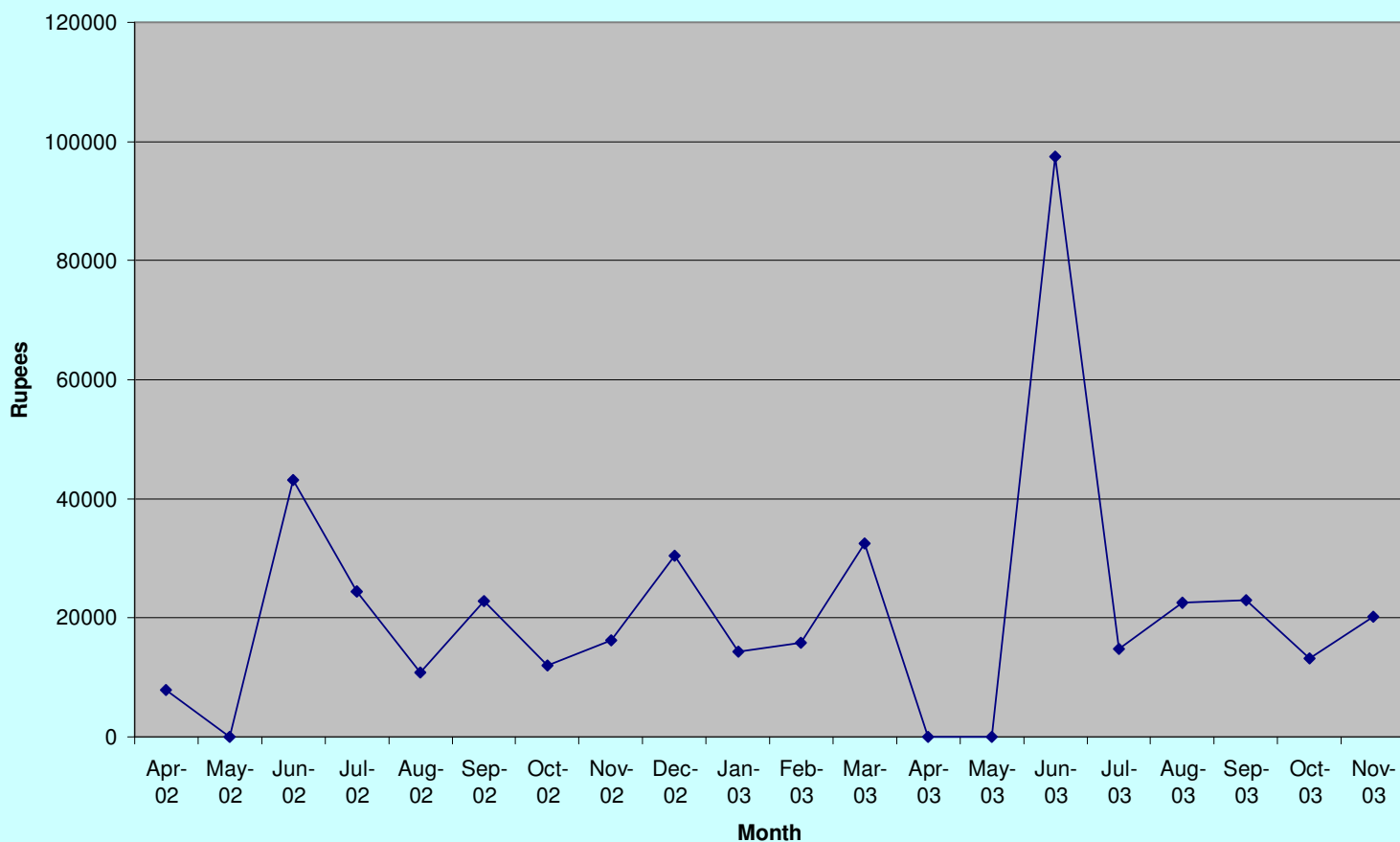


As all the members are women there is no discrimination with regard to male and female in salary matters. However, the salary of the administrative staff is determined according to their qualification and previous experience. Most of the women are the only earning member in the family. Most of the husbands of the women do not work or are a problem to the women.

The number of **working hours** for the members are 8 hours for 6 days a week. The members are entitled to over-time allowances if they work beyond this. The minimum age of the members is 18 years.

**Other benefits:** The children of the members of the organization are helped with their education through a sponsorship program.

### Sponsorship total support per month



One child of every woman who is a member of Creative Handicrafts is sponsored and the school expenses to a great extent is borne by the organization. Besides this a crèche is opened for the small children of the women. The women feel at ease as their small children are well taken care of at the crèche. The elder school-going children come to our study room for study after school and they are helped with their study by a teacher appointed by the organization.

#### **The Social Audit**

The social accounting plan for Creative was designed by Johny Joseph (Director) in consultation with John Pearce (COMMACT UK and CBS Network) in February 2001. A copy of the plan is included as an appendix. Originally it had been intended to prepare social accounts for the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2001 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2002. However because of delays in completing the work it was agreed to extend the period to include 1<sup>st</sup> April 2002 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2003 as well.



Johny Joseph has been responsible for co-ordinating the work for the social accounts, working in consultation with John Pearce and keeping his Board of Trustees informed. Some of the specific consultation work was undertaken by independent researchers.

### **3 Mission, Values, Objectives and Activities**

The Mission, Values, Objectives and Activities were clarified by Johny Joseph and John Pearce in February/March 2001 and approved by the Creative Trustees in May 2001. They are as follows:

**Mission:** *Creative Handicrafts aims to empower women and thus build sustainable and self-reliant communities in the slums.*

#### **Values:**

- To be a fair-trade organisation in all aspects of its work
- To be open and inclusive and not discriminate on grounds of race, religion, caste or sexual orientation.

#### **Key Objective 1.**

*To empower women through training and the creation of employment; by*

- a. establishing economic self-help groups which create employment for the members (6 craft centers and 1 catering center).
- b. providing relevant skill training (the craft training center).
- c. encouraging and supporting self-employment.
- d. providing a creche and a study centre for the children of the women working in the self-help groups.
- e. arranging capacity building training for the members of the self-help groups.
- f. providing sponsorship for education, food and medical care for children of the members of the self-help groups.

#### **Key Objective 2.**

*To tackle social and environmental issues and to provide local services for people living in the slums; by*

- a. organizing and running balwadis for children of the slum.
- b. organizing a community health clinic and running health awareness programmes.
- c. arranging capacity building programmes and adult education for women of the slum.
- d. providing sponsorships for children to pay for education, food and medical care.
- e. promoting savings and credit groups.
- f. tackling local social and environmental issues through advocacy and by networking with other organizations.

#### **Key Objective 3.**

*To be a good and caring employer; by*

- a. paying reasonable wages and providing good working conditions.
- b. arranging training and skill development for staff.

## 4 Stakeholders

### *The Stakeholder Map*

The stakeholders for Creative were identified as part of the planning process in February/March 2001. The following list identifies the key stakeholders whom it was planned to consult for the social accounts and those whom it was intended not to consult.

A decision was taken to focus primarily on Objectives 1 and 3 in these first social accounts of Creative.

#### Key stakeholders to be consulted in this social audit.

- a. women members of the self-help groups (150)
- b. individual producers (20 in total – the 3 regular ones to be consulted)
- c. donor agencies (5)
- d. buyers:
  - i. Overseas (6-7)
  - ii. Local organizations/churches (around 30 - 25% to be consulted)
- e. sponsors (50)
- f. trustees (12)
- g. staff (29)
- h. individual supporters (probably 4 to be identified)

#### Other stakeholders, not included in this social audit

- i. suppliers of goods, materials and services
- j. officials from relevant local and state government departments
- k. regulatory bodies

## 5 Scope of the Social Audit

### **Social book-keeping**

The facts and figures included in section 6 of these social accounts are drawn from the full record-keeping systems which Creative already had in place before engaging in the social accounting process.

It had been intended to introduce a new recording method to document more detail about the capacity-building sessions, health awareness programmes and adult education events (Objective 2). This is noted in the social accounting plan (see appendix). However because the focus in this first social audit cycle was on Objectives 1 and 3 these new records were not kept. It is recognised by Creative that it would be necessary to have such information in order to be able to report fully on Objective 2 in the future.

### **Stakeholder consultations**

The social accounting plan sets out what had been intended with regard to consulting the stakeholders.

Focus group discussions were held with each of the six self-help producer groups (five handicrafts and one fast food lunch boxes). These focus groups were conducted by an independent researcher Ms Sharmila and her full report is included as an appendix. The discussions were tape-recorded.

It was decided because of pressures of time not to consult with the individual producers who make crafts for Creative, but not within the framework of one of the self-help groups. These persons could be included in a future social audit cycle.

Questionnaires were devised to be completed by Creative staff, the Trustees, the donor agencies and the buyers of craft goods. All questionnaires contained common questions about Creative's Mission, Values, Objectives and Activities and specific questions which related to each stakeholder group's particular relationship with Creative. Copies of the questionnaires can be found in the appendices.

Five donor agencies were sent questionnaires and four were returned completed. The questionnaires were returned to and analysed by John Pearce. It turned out not to be practicable to hold an interview with one donor agency as originally planned.

Four of the overseas buyers were sent questionnaires, but only one was returned by someone who was also a donor. Her responses about Mission, Values and Objectives have been analysed with the other donors but her comments as a buyer are included in Section 6 of these social accounts. Creative Handicrafts was disappointed by the low response from overseas buyers and will try to find a more effective way of getting feedback from them in the future. For reasons of time it was not possible in this social accounting cycle to interview a sample of local buyers of goods, but this will be an important element in a future social accounting period.

Fourteen of the 15 permanent, full-time staff completed questionnaires which were available in Hindi as well as in English. The Hindi questionnaires were then translated and sent along with the English questionnaires for analysis by John Pearce. The fourteen part-time staff (9 running the balwadis and 5 working in the office) were not included and it is recognised that they should be included in a future staff consultation.

It had been intended to send a short letter questionnaire to all sponsors of children (circa 50 in number) but on reflection this was considered inappropriate as the majority are Spanish and we did not have the capacity to send out and analyse information in Spanish. Instead a donors questionnaire and a buyers questionnaire was sent to the co-ordinator of sponsors.

A questionnaire was also circulated to the six trustees who are not members of the self-help groups and four completed forms were received. It proved impossible to arrange a discussion with Trustees facilitated by John Pearce during the two years of the social accounting process but it is hoped to arrange a feedback discussion on the social accounts during a future visit by John or other CBSN personnel to Mumbai.

For reasons of time it was agreed to drop the plan to consult with individual supporters of Creative. These stakeholders might be included in a future social accounting cycle.

With hindsight, the original stakeholder consultation plan was too ambitious for a first cycle, especially given the logistics involved with support coming from someone based in the UK. However we believe that those stakeholders consulted do represent the key stakeholders, especially given the focus of these social accounts onto Objectives 1 and 3.

## 6 Analysis of the Social Accounts

**Mission:** *Creative Handicrafts aims to empower women and thus build sustainable and self-reliant communities in the slums.*

All key stakeholders were asked: “How well do you think Creative is achieving its mission?”

	Very well	well	OK	N/a
Trustees	2	1	1	
Donors	1	1	1	1
Staff	7	6	1	

Comments by Trustees:

- *Since the centres have been able to provide employment on a continual basis for many years. This has helped to empower the women especially with regard to family decisions.*
- *More than 50% of the women at Creative are illiterate and have no working skills to help them earn a living. Creative has filled this need to a great extent. With my own experience of working in slums for over a decade we have seen a recent trend of marriages breaking up within a year or two. What then will young girls with no skills or sometimes even unread do to sustain themselves. Even society looks down on them and very often her own parental family rejects her. So the role played by creative however small still goes a long way and makes a difference in the lives of those who have been fortunate to train and work here.*
- *Although the women have been economically empowered their mind-set is still one of dependence on CH.*
- *The question of sustainability is a bit doubtful. CH has made efforts in that direction but more emphasis should be laid on it.*

Comments by Donors:

- *Because they develop a great self-sustainable co-operative and develop serious work.*
- *We always were quite impressed by the different activities set up by Creative, their capacity for innovation, their search for quality.*
- *The reach-out is limited to few people in few slums.*

Comments by Staff:

- *No organisation has realised 100% of its mission*
- *Day by day the mission is progressing and we are aware of the needs of the slum community*
- *Because CH wants to help many slum women and improve their condition*
- *Women have been enabled to live on their own*
- *Because of the response that we receive from the women*
- *I have observed our Centre women have educated themselves better how to survive in today's world*
- *It has been trying very well to give work to women and develop them overall*
- *Because CH has helped many of us to stand on our own feet and that is happening still now*
- *I joined CH having no self-confidence, but now I am capable of fulfilling my responsibilities with courage and in a better way*
- *As far as quality is concerned there is a lot of room for improvement*

Comments from the focus group:

### **Knowledge about the mission and values of Creative Handicrafts**

Women at the centers know that Creative Handicrafts provides employment opportunities to women in need. Most women said, “the organization helps needy women to stand on their feet and earn some money. (majboor aurato ko kaam deti hai, pairo par khada hone ke liye madat karti hai, paisa kamaane ke liye madat karti hai.)” All the women believe that it is a fair organization and does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, and caste. However, most women do feel that the payment is very less. Yet looking at the working conditions they compromise saying that “at least the working conditions are very good”.

### **Key Points:**

It is quite encouraging to see that most of the stake holders have a clear view about the mission of the organization and are of the opinion that Creative Handicrafts is achieving its mission. However, It may be appropriate to clarify two points.

Firstly, there is a comment from one of the donors that the reach out is only to a few. The economic development program reaches out to a specific group which needs economic freedom. The community development program of Creative Handicrafts reaches out to all the slums in and around Mahakali, Andheri.

Secondly, the feeling of women that their income is very less is true but is also one of our top most concerns. It is only correct to explain here that Creative Handicrafts do not pay a salary to its members. The members are grouped in production centers and the quantity of production determines their income. The women in the production centers take a minimum monthly stipend and the rest of the income in the production center is shared among them. Hence, ultimately it is a sharing and not a salary. The organization can only make sure that there is continuous work for the women. The organization would never like to become an employer who is paying the women a salary.

## Values

Stakeholders were asked how well they think Creative lives up to its two Values.

*a. To be a fair-trade organisation in all aspects of its work*

	Very well	well	OK	N/a
Trustees	3	1		
Donors	1	1	1	1
Staff	6	4	4	

Comments by Trustees:

- *Because all the stakeholders and those dealing with the organisation in various capacities are given a fair deal.*

Comments by donors:

- *The quality and price of CH products need to be more competitive.*
- *The activities set up by Creative are in this line with a clear vision.*
- *They have shared during the years that this is what they do.*
- *I think that Creative is always faithful with this fair trade value because even when they are no orders, for example, they don't accept "unfair" conditions and they protect the women. They make women participate and they don't impose unfair situations even in hard times.*

Comments by staff:

- *Because if it goes on like that we may be in loss*
- *Because it goes on little softly*
- *Although there is a lot of competition in the market where sales are concerned, CH has still managed to keep our head above water*
- *Because being a fair trade organisation we are sincere and do not cheat people like any other company does. And this is what people are looking for in a fair trade organisation*
- *Trying not to exploit the customers too*
- *This has been our constant effort. I find CH very fair in all aspects*
- *Certain extent CH is meeting all these values and women are empowered, but sometime I feel lack of unity among the Centres. So we have to do something for that*
- *No other organisation provides facilities like CH for women*

*b. To be open and inclusive and not discriminate on grounds of race, religion, caste or sexual orientation.*

	Very well	well	OK	N/a
Trustees	4			
Donors	1	1	1	1
Staff	9	3	2	

Comments by Trustees:

- *The organisation has been teaching us to fight against the divisive factors of religion, caste and class. So it cannot then have any discriminative element in it.*
- *No women in need has been turned away irrespective of religious background.*
- *All Indian communities are represented in CH's employment at present. CH also deals with a wide representation of society cutting across social, economic and political barriers. It has more women employees than men as a matter of choice to fulfil its mission statement.*
- *The women need to learn more to keep themselves up to date with the modern thinking. It is unfortunate that old values, superstition etc. has still a place in the value system of our women.*

Comments by donors:

- *I have not heard so far of any kind of discriminatory practices.*
- *We have no clear information on this subject as we don't have all the information related to the type of beneficiaries, especially regarding race, religion and caste background. But we assume that the selection is fair.*
- *Many women from different castes take part in the programme.*
- *In the year I spent in Mumbai I never saw any kind of discrimination and women from all races, religions, castes work together.*
- *I think Creative always keep in mind its mission and values. Sometimes it may be more difficult to follow them but till now they managed quite well.*

Comments by staff:

- *This is a strong value for CH*
- *This is a women's organisation, so no question of sexual discrimination; same with race and religion for this is a secular organisation*
- *I have not witnessed any incidents throughout my service*
- *According to religion it is very well – but according to position and caste sometimes it is quite shaky*
- *Since this is a self-employment women's centre, mostly women who come for help to CH should be looked on as an Indian first*
- *All the religion and caste people are working here without any problem*
- *Every religion people work together*
- *Partiality between staff members*
- *Because there is unity and love among all of us*
- *I feel at times talents are not looked upon here. I feel there is partiality here at times*
- *All of them work together*
- *Because there is unity among all of us*
  
- *Need to focus all attention and energy on the original mission of the organisation*
- *Should give more importance to the overall development of women*
- *Should pay the women more*
- *I am happy to see the women are capable to look after their family and CH is growing day by day*
- *There should be some difference when a staff member purchase a soft toy or food (some concession should be given)*

- *Good relationships with all CH persons*

### **Key Points:**

The key element that is reflected right through the above exercise has been that Creative Handicrafts makes no discrimination based on religious background or cultural background. But there is a positive discrimination based on gender. The organization works only for the welfare of women and not men. One of the staff has mentioned that at times there is discrimination based on caste. We do not think it exists in Creative Handicrafts as many do not know the caste of the other.

### **Objectives and Activities**

**Objective 1:** *To empower women through training and the creation of employment*

The following profile of the Centres was written by Ms Sharmila who facilitated the focus groups with the members and we include it here because it gives a good flavour of how the Centres function.

### **Profile of the centers**

On the slopes of Mahakali Temple is a slum community full of life and buzzing with activity. It is impressive to see the clean lanes and pucca structures in the slum. One can see young ladies engaged in their daily chores, mothers fussing over their children, children playing or quarrelling and some studying or getting ready to go to school. Occasionally one can see feriwalas selling all kinds of things – bangles, fruits, vegetables, small household products etc.

Amidst all these activities it is difficult not to notice groups of women sitting together working with their hands and chatting away to glory. These women seem so content and happy creating wonders with their hands. These women are none other than the women working in the cooperatives managed by Creative Handicrafts an organization initiated by Sister Isabel Martin with the aim of empowering women through economic development twenty years ago. This venture, which began twenty years ago with only one center, has grown over the years. Today there are 7 cooperatives involved in making handicraft items and one that supplies lunch packets to factories and offices.

The seven cooperatives commonly known as centers are independent groups producing handicraft items such as soft toys, bags, embroidery work, table cloths, bed covers, pillow covers, and many other items including kurtas. The oldest center is about sixteen years old. However there is a blend of new workers and experienced workers in each center. Each center has a space of its own with basic infrastructure provided through donations and grants received by Creative Handicrafts. The basic infrastructure includes – mats to sit, storage cupboards, sewing machines, telephone, electricity connection, tube lights and fans and a small toilet cum wash room. Each center has to earn enough through their work and pay all their expenses through their earnings. The center bears all the expenses on raw materials, salary, electricity and telephone bills. The profits made by the center are shared among the women in the center after keeping a buffer amount for difficult times. The office staff helps the



center by bringing in orders and in sale of the products made by them. The sales are either local or exports. The women participate in local sales and often go on the mobile sales van of creative handicrafts as well as exhibitions.

Among these six cooperatives five are located close to the Creative Handicrafts main office. However center 2 located at Jari Mari on Andheri Kurla road is far away from the office and commuting to and fro from the office is expensive and difficult. This center was started when a group of women themselves approached Sister Isabel for starting their own venture. This center is more than fifteen years old and is known for the fine finishing of the products made by its workers. The functioning of this center is a little different from that of the others. A tailor affectionately known as uncle guides the center. He handles the training of the workers, purchase of raw materials and sale of the products. The women from this center do not generally come to the office for training. This center also has home project workers where women take their work home and are paid per piece basis.

Asli food started as an alternative to needy women unable to grasp the intricacies of handicrafts and embroidery is only three years old. In the first year this venture suffered a loss and only in its third year it has started making considerable profits. Keeping in mind the fact that the center would not be able to bear all its expenses as it needs time to settle the center is managed by the office and does not have an independent existence. It receives monetary aid from the funds arranged by Creative Handicrafts. The chairperson of Creative Handicrafts is managing the day to day activities of this venture.

### **Profile of the women workers**

Each center on an average has fifteen women. There are about 150 women earning their livelihood at the centers. These women come from disadvantaged families. Each woman has her own share of problems. They have to deal with poverty, alcoholic husband, domestic violence, the trauma of widowhood, the sadness of remaining unmarried and so on and often a feeling of helplessness brings them to Creative Handicrafts for a job. Once the applicants are accepted they go through a training of six months. During the training they are taught various skills such as tailoring, embroidery, and handicrafts. They are paid a stipend of Rs. 400/- per month during the training period. Creative Handicrafts arranges this stipend through their funds and grants. On completing this training they are allotted a center and they begin the on job training for the next six months. In this period their income doubles with half contribution coming from the center. After this period they get a monthly stipend of Rs 1000/-. The center now bears all the expenses of the worker. The increment in their monthly stipend from the centers depends on their productivity. The maximum monthly stipend that a member of a workshop can get is Rs.1800 and this amount is revised every three years.

At Asli food the women were paid only Rs. 800/- per month in the first year. Now they get minimum Rs 1200/- per month as payment. The same pattern of increments is followed for Asli food workers too. The job of the women at Asli food is to assist in the cooking and deliver the lunch boxes to the customers. The Asli food workers begin work at 8:30 am. The women have to prepare the food by 11:00 – 11:30 am. Delivering lunch boxes happens between 12:00 to 2:00 pm. Each woman has about 15

to 20 lunch boxes to deliver every day. Though most of the women are illiterate they know how to keep an account of the money they receive on delivering the lunch boxes. According to one of the workers at Asli Food, "We have got experience. Thus we know that one box costs Rs 20/- so if we sell 15 boxes we shall get 300Rs in total." Another said, "so what if we are illiterate, no one can fool us. We are strong in our accounts." Once they return, they have their lunch and make preparation for the next day. Generally they all wind up by 3:00 unless they have a special order. Sometimes they have to work on Sundays too if they have an order.

The women at the centers belong to different age groups. One will find young girls, women in early adulthood, middle aged as well as senior citizens. There are married women, divorcees, women separated from their husbands and single women too. There are Christians, Hindus, Muslims working in harmony and every one is treated equally. There is no discrimination on the basis of their caste or religion.

*a. by establishing economic self-help groups which create employment for the members (6 craft centers and 1 catering center).*

The objective of creative handicrafts from the time of its inception is to empower women economically, emotionally and culturally. It has been striving to bring about certain amount of self esteem in them as it was found that many women who joined our program did not possess a self esteem, self confidence to even take a decision to get empowered. It was realized over the period of time that the first step to empowerment is economic freedom for women. Hence, it was envisaged to create women's self employment centers for disadvantaged women.

Over the last few years creative handicrafts has been able to create 7 centers (cooperatives) of handicrafts and one center for catering. It has been able give employment to 200 women of the slum communities. The cooperatives are independent as far as administration and finance is concerned.

*b. by providing relevant skill training (the craft training center).*

There are four phases through which the women go through in the process of becoming a member of creative handicrafts.

Phase 1. Acceptance: Women from the community are given the opportunity to expose themselves to the activities of Creative Handicrafts. The decision to join or not is left to them. Women interested to join training are identified and admitted.

Phase: 2. Adoption: One year hands-on training program with a stipend of 400 rupees for the first 6 months and 800 rupees for the second six months.

Phase 3. Starting up: On completion of the training the women can opt to start a new co-operative or join one of the existing cooperatives or be self-employed. They are given all the assistance from the central administrative office.

Phase 4. Entrepreneurs: Consolidating a new centre, learning from other centers through exposure visits and meetings, refresher trainings, etc. to make the newly

opened centers sustainable through hands-on training in production, procurement, new designs and selling their products through Creative Handicrafts.

15 women are undergoing training on an average throughout the year.

Comments from the focus group:

### **Training Sessions**

Very few women have had the opportunity of outdoor training. Whenever there is an outdoor training a few women are selected. These women get trained and then have the responsibility of training others at their center. The same pattern is followed in in-house training. However, each center has the freedom to send a worker during in-house training. The women were aware that selection of the women depends not only on how fast they learn but also on other factors such as ability to teach others, responsibility at home, convenience of the woman etc. One woman said, “if you have small children to look after then you cannot go out for training.”

Women expressed the need to have training in new patterns and new products. They felt that making the same product again and again becomes boring after a while. Thus new patterns and designs should be introduced. A young girl said that they should be taught the latest designs in fashion.

*c. by encouraging and supporting self-employment.*

After successful completion of the training the women have the option of starting their own business and being self-employed or of joining our craft centers. So far there are 50 women who are self-employed at home and all the others work at our craft centers. The women who work at home are encouraged and assisted by Creative Handicrafts to market their products.

*d. providing a creche and a study centre for the children of the women working in the self-help groups.*

Care for the children of the women while they are at work has been a major problem for the women and that used to keep them away from work. To address this problem Creative Handicrafts established a crèche and a study center. The crèche takes care of the non school going children and provides the children with supplementary food as well. The crèche has 30 children. The study center takes care of the school going children. The study center has 35 children.

Comments from the focus group:

### **Facilities**

There is creche and balwadi facility for the children of the workers. The women keep their children in either the creche or the balwadi. This reduces their tension as the children are taken care of when they are at work. Apart from creche and balwadi many women had taken sponsorship for their child. According to the sponsorship scheme all school-related expenses of one child per family are taken care of.

Some women did speak about credit and loan facility and provident fund. However, they were not very clear about the provident fund as it has been newly introduced in the past few months.

They knew that there were two social workers that they could contact when in need of help. In 2 centers the women spoke about a case when one of the workers was diagnosed to have a lump in her breast and the help extended to that worker during her operation.

The women at Asli food and center 5 mentioned the need to have insurance policies in their name. As one widow worker rightly said, “today I am there to look after my children. But tomorrow god forbid something happens to me then who will take care of them. In case we have an insurance then we wouldn’t worry.”

*e. arranging capacity building training for the members of the self-help groups.*

As self-employment is the first step to empowerment the organization does its work with providing them with a regular income. Capacity building trainings form a part and parcel of the program right through out the year. During the year 2001 – 2002 four training programs oriented to different issues were held. Experts from outside the organization were called to organize these workshops. They have been on leadership, management of emotions, conflict management within the family and in the work place and maternal and child health. Besides these one refresher course was organized for the women to upgrade their skills and to learn to make new products.

In the year 2002 – 2003 three training programs were organized to address the different problems that the women face. These three trainings addressed the problems of better co-operation among the women in the workshops, better productivity and improved quality of products.

The major capacity building program during the last two years has been the introduction of new designers and the new collection of products. In the year 2001 two designers came from Spain to design new products and the markets in Spain have welcomed these products. We came out with a new catalogue as well during this period. The same designer returned to design another collection for Creative Handicrafts during the months of September – October 2002. These products also have been welcomed very well by the Spanish and the Italian market.

*f. providing sponsorship for education, food and medical care for children of the members of the self-help groups.*

The income that the women of the crafts centers earn is still at the subsistence level. Hence, there is a need to ensure better support to their families. As part of this support program, Creative Handicrafts has been able to establish a sponsorship program for the children of the women of the craft centers. The entire educational expense of one child of every woman working with Creative Handicrafts is sponsored by Creative Handicrafts through its sponsorship program. Moreover, many children from the community around Creative Handicrafts are given sponsorship for their education. The sponsored children get a maximum of Rs.500 towards educational expenses of the child. The sponsor makes a contribution of Rs.600 every month. Rs.100 is kept by

Creative Handicrafts for its administrative expenses like payment of salary for one social worker who looks after sponsorship program.

The Focus Groups also discussed **working conditions**:

According to the women working at the centers the working conditions are very good. Many women feel that the center is their second home. In one worker's words, "we all work together as a family. We are here to understand each other and provide support in times of need." They do quarrel and fight and there are misunderstandings but everything is taken in good spirit. One woman said, "I quarrel a lot, but when I know every one is angry at me, I go home and come back when everyone has cooled down."

Secondly, they are aware that they have ownership of the center, as it is a cooperative. Thus they know that the progress of the center is in their hands. If they work hard and complete orders on time, they will get more orders. Their logic is simple – more orders, means more money.

The women are also aware of the democratic set up of the center. They are aware that they elect their **In charge** and the accountant. The election takes place every three years, however they have the right to change an In charge if they are not satisfied with the performance or if there are some problems. This keeps a check on the "In-charge" too and hence the misuse of position is minimized.

They have flexibility in timings. Thus no one shouts or gives a warning when they are late. An attempt is made to understand their problems. In the words of one of the women, "I always become late as I have to fill up water. Everyone understood my problem." Another woman said, "When my child was ill, I used to come late to work," The center has a rule that if anyone is late or goes home early, then that person has to work extra hours & fill up for that time sometime in future. The center is also close to their home and thus they can go home from time to time during crisis situations.

Women do feel the pressure when they have a deadline to meet as they have to work extra hours and neglect their homes a little. However they are paid overtime in such cases. They also feel the stress when there are not many orders and business is slow.

They also found the payments to be very low. Women from almost all centers said that it is becoming extremely difficult to manage with such less payment especially now when everything has become so expensive. However, they knew that if the selling price of their product were increased, their products would not sell. They believed that the payments would increase if their sales increase and they produce more.

Stakeholders were asked to rate how well Creative has achieved Objective 1 on a scale 1 (very unsuccessful to 5 (very successful).

	Very successful	Quite successful	OK	Rather unsuccessful	Very unsuccessful	N/a
Trustees	1	3 *				
Donors	1	1	1			1
Staff	4	8	1			1

\* One Trustee said Activity “e” was only “OK”

Stakeholders were also asked to rank the six activities in order of how important they considered them to be. However it became apparent in the analysis that several, especially the donors, had misunderstood the ranking instructions and therefore it is not possible to give safe information for purposes of comparison. For Trustees it seems that activities “e” and “f” are considered least important a view seemingly shared by the staff for whom “c”, “b” and “a” appear to be most important.

One donor commented: *I think they should focus more on self-employment or on helping women find jobs in other companies once they are trained, so that there could be rotation in the centres and they could help more women.*

The focus group facilitator summarised key issues arising from the discussions and made some suggestions:

#### **Development of the women at Creative Handicrafts:**

Employment and self-income definitely plays an important role in empowerment of women. It is here that the women get an opportunity to free themselves from the four walls of their home and experience the world. Self-income provides confidence and courage to face people and fight problems. The workers in one of the centers rightly said, “Since I have started working I have become an extrovert. Earlier I was very scared and shy. I couldn’t go out in my area alone. Now, I go on sales and I know how to deal with people. I am confident I can travel anywhere alone.” Another worker said, “Earlier I had to take permission of my husband for everything, now I can tell my husband that I also work, I have a good judgement of the right and wrong.”

At this stage, it is very difficult to talk about the level of empowerment. We would require case studies for the same. However, the discussions did bring out the following hypothesis that needs to be further studied:

1. Level of empowerment increases with the years of experience of working. I noticed a considerable difference in the confidence level among the relatively new workers. The relatively new workers were still shy and not as confident as the older workers. This was noticeable at Asli foods. This center is only three years old and I needed to encourage the women to talk every now and then. Where as in the older centers 2 and 5 the women spoke very confidently.
2. The level of empowerment depends on the personality of the worker. I could see that women who were more extrovert and sharp participated more in the discussion.
3. The level of empowerment also depends on the leadership opportunities and responsibilities given to the women. In almost all centers the In charge and the accountant was more vocal.
4. The level of empowerment is also related to the circumstances and family situations of the worker.

5. The social environment of the worker also affects the empowerment of the women.

### **Impressions:**

The organization is clear about its mission and is taking steps to ensure that they follow the values of the organization. Through their work policies and working conditions it is clear that the organization is sensitive to women and their needs and their problems. This approach is evident through the creche and balwadi facility, the recently started provident fund facility, and the credit and loan facility made available to the women.

The most impressive aspect was the feeling of responsibility among the women in all the centers. The women regard the centers as their second home. They are aware that the development of the center is dependent on them. If they work hard and cooperate with everyone, their center would prosper. Every woman has a special bonding with her center.

However, the organization is not very clear about what they mean by empowerment. Is empowerment equivalent to economic independence? Or is it much more? The organization needs to set parameters for empowerment. On the basis of these parameters they could evaluate the level of empowerment of the women working in the centers.

### **Suggestions from the Focus Group:**

1. Payments given to the women are too less. In some cases they do not reach the minimum wages criteria. The organization needs to work in this area.
2. A life insurance policy needs to be issued for the women working at Asli foods.
3. If the products and the place are not covered by insurance, it needs to be done.

### **Key Points:**

It is interesting to note that a majority of the stake holders are of the opinion that Creative Handicrafts is achieving its objective of empowerment of women through training and self employment. It is rather difficult to measure the level of achievement of this objective as empowerment is highly a qualitative aspect which is not easily measurable.

One area of concern for many has been the income earned by the women even after their hard work. This is an area of concern for Creative Handicrafts as well. Increased productivity is the only answer to it as that is the only component in the price of the product that can be controlled. Creative Handicrafts wants to continue to work on this aspect.

**Objective 2:** *To tackle social and environmental issues and to provide local services for people living in the slums*

- a. organizing and running balwadis for children of the slum.*

The organization has started 5 Balwadies (play schools) in the neighbouring slums and 7 Balwadies in the tribal colonies in Goregaon. A total of 500 children study in our Balwadies. They are all given nutritional assistance as most of them do not have the means to have full meal at home.

*b. organizing a community health clinic and running health awareness programmes.*

Health has been a major issue that the organization has been addressing in the slum communities. Free eye check-up and cataract operation camps have been organized in 5 slums and 6 tribal colonies with the assistance of other organizations.

Awareness programs on alcoholism and its ill effects, HIV and AIDS, communicable diseases, Hygiene, etc. have been organized in the slums through out the year.

*c. arranging capacity building programmes and adult education for women of the slum.*

The organization has been able to arrange one training program of 9 months for the tribal women in Goregaon. Two such trainings are successfully completed and the women have been given a certificate and a machine to be self-employed. These women are given training in personal and interpersonal relationships as well as literacy training. 32 women have been trained during the last two financial years.

*d. providing sponsorships for children to pay for education, food and medical care.*

The sponsorship program is extended to the communities as well to help extremely poor children to secure good education. There are 150 children from the communities who benefit from this program.

*e. promoting savings and credit groups.*

Saving has not been a habit for the women. But borrowing has been only second nature to them. Many women of the slum communities have been victims of the heavy interest levied by the money lenders in the slum communities. To counter this Creative Handicrafts has begun saving and credit groups in the slum communities. 500 women in the slum communities are members of these groups and they save in the group and take loans from the groups. ***There are 20 groups who are presently members of the Saving and Credit Federation of Creative Handicrafts.***

*f. tackling local social and environmental issues through advocacy and by networking with other organizations.*

Creative Handicrafts is part of the network that works on the improvement of the public distribution system in Mumbai. The network organizes discussions, demonstrations, etc. on various issues related to the PDS. One of our social workers regularly attend the meetings.

Stakeholders were asked to rate how well Creative has achieved Objective 2 on a scale 1 (very unsuccessful to 5 (very successful).



	Very successful	Quite successful	OK	Rather unsuccessful	Very unsuccessful	N/a
Trustees		4 *				
Donors			2	1		1
Staff	1	6	5			2

- One Trustees said “f” was “rather unsuccessful”

Again, it is difficult to interpret the uncertain ranking data. Staff appear to think activities “a” and “b” are the most important while trustees seem to think “c” and “f” are most important.

No comments were made by stakeholders on this Objective.

The focus of Creative Handicrafts has been Objective one and not so much Objective two which was inculcated in order to make our presence felt in the communities and to make our program more integrated. It has to be admitted that Creative Handicrafts has not made a remarkable progress in this area. Hence, we do not find much of a mention from the Stakeholders as well.

**Objective 3: To be a good and caring employer**

*a. by paying reasonable wages and providing good working conditions.*

Creative Handicrafts never wants to establish an employer – employee relationship with the women who are working in the co-operatives because they are the ultimate owners of this organization. The proceeds of the sale of all products is shared by the women of the co-operatives. The working environment is made friendly and there is a consistent effort to create a family feeling without losing the attitude of professionalism. All the members of the cooperatives and the employees of the office have the opportunity to redress grievances. Meetings of the leaders of the cooperatives, members of the cooperatives and staff members of the office are held at regular intervals to sort out problems and to march ahead.

	Very successful	Quite successful	OK	Rather unsuccessful	Very unsuccessful	N/a
Trustees	3	1				
Donors		1	2			2
Staff	2	5	4	1		2

Comments of Trustees:

- *The Director/Coordinator and the Trustees have dialogued time and again with the centres’ supervisory staff to give advice and secure feedback about issues related to wages and working conditions. The women are also encouraged to voice their grievances which are taken up at the meeting as early as possible.*
- *The centres are efficiently run and minimum wages are paid to all employees but the centres are still not totally self-reliant and need to work towards this in the long-run.*

Comments by Donors:

- *Difficult to rate.*
- *I am not very sure about the wages and working conditions.*
- *We have in fact very little information on the subject, but we think that the working atmosphere looks good.*
- *Working conditions are really good taking into account the situation.*
- *Creative is continuously trying to improve working conditions, finding bigger rooms, painting etc....and always tries to pay reasonable wages. Of course if sales were more they could pay better but the good intention is always there.*

Comments by Staff:

- *Because I like to work in this organisation*
- *We cannot meet our ends even after working for so many years in CH*
- *I feel all are receiving good salary according to their work and I am satisfied with my salary and work*
- *Work condition is good but wages is not reasonable, with the increased price of many things – and there are many demands in today’s world*
- *It is unreasonable to compare with the private sector. As a social enterprise it pays reasonably.*
- *CH pays a reasonable wage – it may not be the best pay*
- *I am not utilized well though I have studied up to higher secondary and I am a good artist. I know computer operation as well.*

*b. arranging training and skill development for staff.*

Three refresher courses each were held during the last two years, 2001 – 02 and 2002 – 03. This has been to enhance the skills of the women. All the staff members are encouraged to attend courses that enhance their efficiency and skills.

	Very successful	Quite successful	OK	Rather unsuccessful	Very unsuccessful	N/a
Trustees		2	2			
Donors			3			1
Staff	1	3	10			

Comments of Trustees:

- *Training is most successful only with regard to the skills for making the particular products, and not so much to change the mind-sets.*
- *Staff are sent outside on need basis and outside trainers are invited in from time to time.*
- *I do not feel very satisfied with the type of training imparted to the women. What I am referring here to is not the skill training but capacity building. Awareness level is promoted but it needs to be enhanced. Training and Awareness should be aimed not only at the individual growth level but the capacity building should enable to act as change agents in their own locales. Similarly inputs on issues related to their socio-economic milieu should not be just one time vaccine shots to*

*be taken and forgotten but should lead to an action plan or a change in overall conditions thus moving towards sustainability.*

Comments of Donors:

- *This aspect requires more investment and stronger efforts.*
- *We have little information/ not enough information about this.*
- *They always try to train staff through courses like computer and to make them participate in seminars, talks etc.*

Comments of Staff:

- *Because it is important for the staff to be well qualified*
- *Training alone is not enough – it needs to be used as well*
- *These are good to have because all will be aware of what is happening in the organisation and we will have more interest to work for the women*
- *Because it helps to improve the knowledge and further the education which might help the organisation*
- *Maybe the staff appointed are rather skilled and professionally qualified*
- *Need to send staff for more training*
- *I would like to have English training but I am not getting time for that*
- *Because it is important to work long-term powerfully*

The staff of Creative were also asked a series of questions about their work with the organisation.

***Understanding Creative***

Six employees said they understand the work of other sections “quite well” and only one “very well”. Three thought their understanding to be “OK” and four said they did not well understand what other sections do. However 13 thought they should understand and only one did not.

Staff were asked how best they might be able to contribute to the growth and development of other sections:

- *I understand that a lot depends on me. I am committed to the growth of CH. This I can achieve through a long stint here*
- *By doing my own job sincerely and honestly*
- *First concentrate on my own responsibilities*
- *By getting involved and helping the other departments in their work whenever we can*
- *Have contact with other departments and help and support their needs*
- *Helping in all ways whenever help is needed*
- *In whatever way we want to, we can do for other departments*
- *I am able to give more time for sales in the mornings*
- *Build relationships with each other – every staff must understand the aim and objectives, and respect, others*
- *In whatever way we can do for them*

### ***Communications in Creative***

Staff were asked if there are good communications within Creative.

	Very good	good	OK	poor	Very poor	N/a
Between sections	2	4	2	4		2
Between staff and managers	7	2	3			2
Between staff and Trustees	3	2	3	2	2	2

### ***Enjoying working at Creative***

Seven employees said that they very much enjoyed working for Creative, one said s/he enjoyed working there and five said it was “OK”. One person admitted to not much liking to work for Creative. Ten employees explained what it was that they enjoyed – and did not enjoy:

- *I enjoy working in CH*
- *Enjoy the successful work – you enjoy that without knowing*
- *Enjoy working there – and every year there is the staff picnic*
- *Enjoy working with women and selling the items we/they make*
- *Enjoy working on the computer and also interacting with the women*
- *Enjoy the feeling of togetherness and belonging*
- *Enjoy being able to help the women’s sector*
- *Working close to home*
- *I enjoy the morning session.....*
  
- *....And not the afternoons*
- *There is no unity in CH*
- *Unnecessary misunderstanding between staff – not good relationships*
- *I am not able to improve my talent and skill*

Eleven employees said that they are very proud to work for Creative while two said “OK” and one admitted to not being very proud about working there. One person commented: *Because this is the first organisation which works fairly and for the betterment of women*

### ***The working environment***

Six employees are very satisfied, and four quite satisfied, with the physical working conditions while three say they are “OK” and three are rather unsatisfied and one very unsatisfied. Two comments:

- *More attention should be paid to improve the cleanliness of the office*
- *Sometimes problematic conditions*

### ***Contributing to Creative***

Eleven employees identified what they considered to be the contribution they make/could make to improve the performance of Creative:

- *Preparing samples*
- *We can make more samples*
- *Systematise production and sales; improve efficiency of each department*
- *Streamlining the finances*
- *Start up the catering centre*
- *Put forward several new projects*
- *Making more groups of people; finding new areas for sales; publicizing CH*
- *I can give more time in the morning*
- *Doing sponsorship programme work; helping women with medical problems*
- *Maintaining financial records honestly and correctly*
- *Sincerity and hard-working attitude; ready to do any work*
- *Being the salesgirl*
- *Doing project accounts*

And the following were the ideas put forward about how staff thought they could work better to help Creative achieve its Objectives:

- *Design new products*
- *Open retail outlets in the city*
- *Sell our things from different shops*
- *More export and more local orders*
- *Enough work and orders*
- *Advertising*
- *General publicity in periodicals and papers*
  
- *Diversify activities to generate more employment*
- *Give more work to the women and give them more money*
- *Opportunities for women*
- *Women should increase the speed of their work*
  
- *Work faithfully on the jobs that have been entrusted to us*
- *By coming and starting work on time*
- *Fulfil my responsibilities; give suggestions; have good relationships between departments*
- *By doing an honest job*
- *Can give more time*
  
- *Training needs to be improved*
- *Have more dealings with community and tribal people; especially to provide counselling and health awareness*

And finally, staff gave ideas about how Creative might increase its regular income:

- *Toys should be well made – especially the finishing (two people)*
- *Try to find new angles for funding and for sales*

- *Increasing sales*
- *Introduce new items and find markets*
- *Have a shop in the city*
- *Build contacts with schools and colleges; exhibitions; publicity*
- *By printing CH and address on plastic bags; distribute handbills*
- *Increase sales – donations unreliable*
  
- *Tap the donors to re-invest*
- *Build a surplus which can support head office costs*

### **Key Points:**

It has been very interesting to look at the ratings and further the comments made by all the stake holders. The impression that we receive is that on the whole the stake holders are of the opinion that Creative Handicrafts is achieving this objective to a great extent. It has been very encouraging to see the willingness of the staff members to contribute more towards the growth of the organization.

Training, both skill training and capacity building programs, has been the hall mark of the last two years. Considerable effort has been made to enhance the level of awareness to help the women reach a stage of self reliance.

It would be only appropriate to highlight that CH has already been able address many of the suggestions which have been put forth. We have been able to appoint a designer to look into the problem of launching new products every year. A memorandum of understanding has been reached with a designing school in Spain to help us design new products for the European market. As a result, for the last three years, CH has been able to launch a new catalogue every year.

To counter the problem of retail marketing CH has been able to successfully establish a shop in Mumbai. It could be considered the first ever Fair Trade Shop in Mumbai.

Consistent efforts have been made to get new buyers both in the domestic as well as international Market.

## **7 Other views of Stakeholders**

### **Trustees**

We asked the Trustees about the way the Board of Trustees works.

First, about *the purpose of the Committee*. With one exception they all agreed that they are not responsible for day to day management and were agreed that their main roles are about deciding policy issues and strategic direction and acting as advisors to the organisation. They were evenly split about the importance of their role in giving support to staff and two did not think they had ultimate responsibility for the financial good management of Creative.

Comments:

- *The trustees as a group are a mixed lot. Some take interest, some do not. Hence we can't really speak of them functioning in a particular way AS A GROUP.*
- *Although I strongly agree to all the aspects the first one is not too practical as I also work with a social organisation and travel around which leaves less scope in getting involved on a day to day basis. On other counts I rarely pass up a trustee meeting unless it clashes with my work schedule. Regarding the aspect of taking legal responsibility I confess I lack the expertise in this field even though I fully agree that it ought to be done.*

Second, about *the way the Committee works*. The majority think they receive enough information to fulfil their duties as a Committee member, but two suggested that papers and minutes could be circulated in better time. All agreed the meetings are well-run and only one person reported finding it a little difficult to participate in the meetings. Generally Trustees thought the meetings were focussed and constructive but two did seem to think that the committee might meet a little more often.

Comments:

- *Perhaps the Committee needs to be more active.*
- *Some kind of in-depth input to the organisation's work would be interesting once in a way for the trustees.*
- *Trustees need to be more involved. This might happen if their roles are clearly defined and if they meet more often. This would enable them to be more productive and useful to the organisation.*

Third, *about the membership of the Committee*. All were agreed that the Committee is well balanced as regards external and SHG members and that it is of the right size. However one person thought it not so well balanced regarding gender and age.

Comments:

- *Some more trustees could be inducted, those who have an influential role in society at large. This would give an image boost to the organisation and help one of its core activities: that is improve local sales.*
- *Some of the trustees are not present for meetings and never take interest in the activities of CH and never guide also.*
- *I am not sure how useful the presence of some of the members of the committee is. As far as the women from the SHGs who are members, there are problems here too, as they have generally not been able to rise above their own "individual needs" in making decisions about the overall goals/needs of the organisation.*

### **Key Points:**

One major issue that has come up above is the role of the trustees, the governing board. 50% of the board members are women representing the cooperatives. This means that they are both visionaries, policy makers and beneficiaries. The contribution that they are able to make as far as the vision planning of the organization is concerned is very limited. But it is the value base of the organization that prompts it to include representatives of the women at the highest level of decision making.

The other board members have a definite and decisive role to play in guiding the organization to a solid future. Most of these board members are not able to find a lot of time for CH due to their own 100% involvement in their professional world.

For the last two years the committee has been meeting at a very regular intervals. Induction of a few key members into the committee has been able to bring about vision in its approach and planning. The contribution made by Mr. Josantony Joseph, a new member of the board, has helped the organization of move forward with clear vision.

### Donors

We also asked Donors about their support to Creative. Generally the satisfaction scores were positive (5 = “strongly agree”, 1 = “strongly disagree”).

We think that Creative gives us good value for money	4	5	5	3
The reports we receive about the work of Creative give us exactly the information we require	3	4	3	3
The financial reports we receive give us the information we need	3	4	4	4
Creative is an efficient organisation to deal with	4	5	5	3
Creative always send us the reports on time	4	4	4	4

#### Comments:

- *We are satisfied with the reports received. They might not send us all the information spontaneously, but once asked on a specific subject, they usually provide it to us properly.*
- *I think more in terms of children’s sponsors. They would like to receive more information about the organisation (what you are doing, what are the projects...) and also detailed and more personal information about the children and their families.*

The following comments were made about their long-term plans with regard to their partnership with Creative:

- *Intermon Oxfam has no long term plans with Creative Handicrafts as our priorities for co-operation in Maharashtra have changed. We have moved from projects to programmes for promoting agro-based sustainable livelihoods in the rural areas. Unfortunately, the objectives and activities of Creative Handicrafts do not fall within the revised co-operation priorities of Intermon Oxfam.*
- *We would rather like to keep our relation not on a financial basis, but rather in terms of facilitating their fair-trade, linking them with other organisations, providing exchanges, training.*
- *Keep financing projects and think about broadening the income programmes*

One donor thought it likely that Creative would be financially independent of donors within two years while two thought it unlikely. One declined to comment.

#### Comments:

- *Difficult to answer this question! Certainly it is possible if the organisation makes strategic efforts.*



- *Sometimes there is a focus on charity instead of business. Maybe it will be good to find a way to better integrate both goals.*
- *We think that creative has strong potential, but the more they will develop their “social” actions the more difficult it will be for them to become financially independent. In that context we would rather recommend to maybe concentrate some of their actions.*
- *I think it is very difficult to become independent because besides the income generating activities there are all the social activities which are as important and that they must not abandon. That is why it is very hard to generate enough money for everything. NGOs all over the world live though donations because the final aim is not to earn money but to help as efficiently as possible.*

Finally suggestions about how Creative might increase its income and become more financially independent included improving the quality of products and investing more in product design, investing in the skill development of the women, and putting a greater focus onto marketing, both locally and internationally.

### **Key Points:**

Creative Handicrafts definitely is making an effort to make itself sustainable as far as its fair trading work is concerned. CH firmly believes that trade has to become financially viable and sustainable for continuity. In fact, at present, CH’s fair trade operation is presently viable.

It is the community development work that needs constant support. There are a number of community development initiatives that CH has made and these can be continued only with outside support as it is not possible to generate sufficient surplus from the fair trade work to sustain these activities.. The problems in the slums and the slums themselves in Mumbai are only increasing. As a result, organizations like CH cannot remain idle but have to respond and seek the funds from outside to pay for that work.

### **Buyers**

The one buyer who returned a questionnaire has been buying from Creative for four years but had not in fact purchased any goods in the year just past. She was positive about Creative’s efficiency, timeliness of despatch and response to suggestions but thought there was room for improvement so far as quality is concerned.

### **Comments:**

- *I think Creative is very efficient dealing with exports (documents, papers, shipments, etc...). We never had any problem in this because of them.*
- *Concerning the quality, it is variable. Sometimes we order one article and the quality is perfect and next time we order the same article and the quality is very bad. I think it depends on which center makes it. I believe that it is good that different centers can be able to produce the same articles but Creative must make sure that the training is correct and that the new center is able to produce a perfect article in terms of quality before giving them any export order.*
- *Anyway, the global quality is usually quite good. Bad quality products have always represented a low percentage of what we receive but I know they can still*

*improve because the quality of some articles is absolutely perfect and they should all be like that.*

And the following comments were made about product lines:

- *I don't think they should develop "western" products. I think their products should keep this Indian touch which people like here. If they try and copy western products it will be very difficult because competition will be very hard.*
- *Many people here want to buy printed cloth, like the bedcovers they sell in Rajasthan, with sort of gurjari prints. This would be very successful.*

### **Key Points:**

Creative handicrafts has been a bit disappointed that only one of the buyers responded. In our next social audit, we will be making a concerted effort to include the comments of all the buyers. However, it should be noted that most of our buyers have been in constant touch with and have expressed their satisfaction with the quality of our products. The director had the opportunity to meet a few of these buyers last year and it was heartening to receive their appreciation for our products.

One of the areas that we were asked to improve was the designs. The organization wanted us to come out with new products every year. As a result, Creative Handicrafts as made an effort bring out a catalogue every year with a variety of new products. .

## **8 Environmental impact**

Creative Handicrafts has been adopting practices that are consistent and relevant to the community that it is operating in. It is a policy that the office and the premises of creative handicrafts will remain simple as the houses of the people who live around us. The women who work at Creative Handicrafts should feel that they are not working in a place that is very alien to them. It is the aim of creative handicrafts to keep its working environment clean and to use materials that are environment friendly.

Creative intends to make an effort to work on an environmental policy in the near future.

## **9 Compliance**

We comply with all the statutory regulations listed out by IFAT. Besides this there are regulations and procedures set down by the monitoring body of the government. We comply with all those regulations that are applicable to us as a Fair Trade organization and as a Charitable Trust.

## 10 Finance

*Johny – I suggest you just put in a brief summary of the overall income and expenditure for Creative showing where the money comes from and what the major areas of expenditure are. Maybe in the form of a pie chart or a table?*

I shall send you this part later on... I need to work on it. I need to give an accountable that is sensible to the readers. The system of accounts here is too complicated.

## 11 Main Issues, Conclusions and Recommendations

*Johny – we shall do this last*

These are your summary of the main issues which arise from the social accounts. If you have identified them in the Comments sections of the Analysis of the Social Accounts then you can simply repeat them here and draw the conclusions and recommendations you think appropriate. There may be conflicting views from different stakeholder groups which can be highlighted here.

## 12 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Social Audit Process

**CH considers that the social audit process was a worthwhile exercise. In particular the views expressed through the focus group, by the staff and by the donors were interesting and helpful as well as constructive. The focus group appears to have been a very successful method of consulting the production workers in the co-operatives and a questionnaire worked well with the staff, especially as it was available in both Hindi and English.**

**The response from Buyers was disappointing, but at the same time CH receives regular feedback from them during the course of the year and has been able to respond to issues raised (eg design).**

**A major problem has been the time it has taken to complete these social accounts. First, the work has had to be fitted in to an already busy schedule by the CH Director and second the support from John Pearce of CBSN has been “long-distance” and only available face-to-face on a brief annual visit to India. These problems could be reduced a) if resources could be found to pay for someone within CH to work part-time as the social accountant and b) if there were a social accounting network or programme within in India which could offer training, guidance and support.**

**Because of resource constraints it was not possible to arrange a discussion with the Trustees as part of the social audit and there are other stakeholders whom CH would like to consult in future.**

**Notwithstanding the problems CH believes there is considerable value in the process and intends to do it again.**

## 13 Future Plans

### *Dissemination and Dialogue*

We intend to send a printed copy of the social audit report to all the stake holders. We would continue to dialogue with them to make improvements in areas that beg for improvement.

The findings of the social accounts have been discussed at staff meetings and by the Trustees and fed back to donors and buyers informally by the Director at various meetings.

The full social accounts can be seen on the following websites: Creative Handicrafts [www.xxxxxxx](http://www.xxxxxxx), Social Audit Network [www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk](http://www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk); and CBS Network: [www.cbs-network.org.uk](http://www.cbs-network.org.uk)

Creative Handicrafts proposes to do another social audit after 2 years to see the improvements that we have made.