Progress Report
(May 01, 2022 to Nov 20, 2022)

Project name: New Craft training for women in Sittilingi Valley

Project villages: 3 (Three)
Villages Name: 1. Sittilingi 2. Malaithangi and 3. Mel Thanda
Block Name: Harur PO, Dist. Dharmapuri, TamilNadu

Project Goal:

The overall goal of the project is to to make this remote population self-reliant and to prevent migration which is the biggest current threat to health of the Valley.

The plan is at 3 levels -

- Recruitment and Training
- Design Development of New Products so as to not compete with existing groups but enhance the overall output and brand Porgai.
- Marketing program and exploring Sales avenues

The core values of empowering women, adhering to usage of natural materials and hand skills, sustainable practices and fair trade remains unchanged.

Duration and location of the project:

By the end of a month long training followed by a month of production and when the retail season commences, one trial run of sales, the group of trainees will be trained in not just their hand skill but also in design, costing and market exposure. With an expansion of workforce and an opportunity to recycle the discarded materials from Porgai's regular production, the project will have an enhanced output and sales making it capable of addressing the economic welfare of more people in the valley of Sittilingi through crafts, which is its primary goal.

While we have scheduled 3 months for training 20 women in the new skill, timelines depend on ground realities. Till date, 12 out of the 20 women have commenced training. The next batch of 12 will commence in December 2022.

The full impact of training will be known only once the products are tested in the market and this too depends on favourable market conditions as last 20 months have seen unprecedented fluctuations due to CoVid.

Year one will be spent exploring markets and new skill development. It will take one full production and retail cycle to understand the viability of the products and tweak them to suit consumer needs.

Year two is required to establish a steady presence in the market ensuring year round income for all the women trained. This translates to funding requirements for marketing and Design but not necessarily for training.

The second year would also be a time to explore and document other crafts in the valley to adopt in future expansion plans. Porgai follows fair trade practices and seldom has any surplus to invest in much needed documentation of other traditional and wholly viable vocations practised by the people in the valley. Besides rope making and embroidery, there exist traditions of handloom weaving, pottery and basketry within the valley so there is ample scope for expansion of economic empowerment through traditional crafts but this would mean expanding the managerial team, access to more funds, mapping new markets and dedicated effort towards training these groups which Porgai is currently not equipped to handle. This would indeed be our ideal and very fulfilling future to work toward.

Progress made from May 2022 till Nov 2022:

A motivation drive was conducted in the villages within the Sittilingi valley along with interviews of aspirants wishing to join this training.
The three villages selected were based on their locations as none were next to each other. This ensured a distributed enrolment across the valley.
While embroidery skills remain the strength and identity of the Lambani tribe in the valley, the need for sustainable livelihoods is prevalent in other communities too hence this training will help Porgai provide an income to the greater population of the valley and not be limited to the Lambanis alone.

The training was delayed due to an unforeseen circumstance of the main trainer and designer suffering a health setback which she took 3 months to recover from. However, now things are back on track.

The main idea is to use all the fabric scraps generated by Porgai team in their regular production and create saleable products from these thereby making every bit of fabric count. While two crafts of rope making and hand quilting have been chosen, it was decided to start with the simpler of the two crafts techniques that requires only basic sewing skills. Hence patchwork was selected.

The selected trainees are:

Sno	Name	Age	Village
1	P Saraswathi	25	Sittilingi
2	K Anjala	29	Sittilingi
3	M Venkadeswari	24	Sittilingi
4	L Sneha	25	Malaithangi
5	R Muniyammal	25	Malaithangi
6	T Gandhimathi	30	Malaithangi
7	S Kowsalya	26	Mel Thanda
8	K Vinitha	24	Mel Thanda
9	P Ranjitha	26	Mel Thanda
10	R BhakkiLakshmi	32	Mel Thanda
11	A Vanmathi	23	Mel Thanda
12	R Gowri	21	Mel Thanda

The training module thus far included -
Understanding the use of Colour -

- The trainees were shown the colour wheel and explained Colour theory that helps in choosing the apt colour combinations for any given product that emotes a desired appeal. They were taught primary, secondary and tertiary colours; complimentary and analogous colours; split complimentary and triads; warm and cool palettes, monochromatic and polychromatic palette and tints and shades.
- Then they were given the task of choosing their desired sets of scrap fabrics.
- The quilting technique using only hand sewing which is practised by several nomadic communities across the world was taught to them.
- How to trim and layer fabric, how to hide raw seams, how to sew even stitches, how to sew swiftly and neatly was all taught.
- Each woman was given a 10” x 10” piece of base cloth over which she layered her quilting using a monochromatic palette with a complimentary thread.
- Once they accomplished this task, a larger piece of base fabric (an old cotton saree was used) of 20” x 20” was given so they learn to work on a bigger surface.
- Over time, they will be made to expand the size to a full quilt size of 60” x 90” where their stitches will remain even and their speed will be better than now.

Here are some images from the training thus far -

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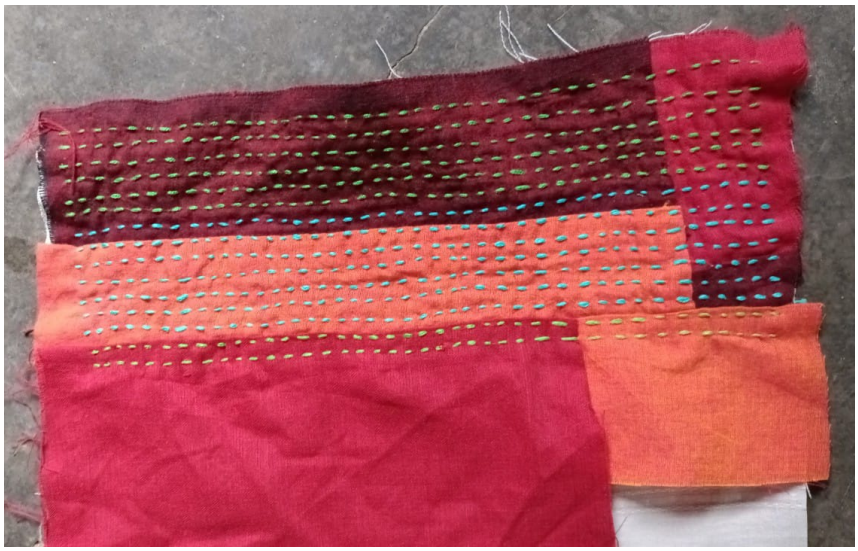

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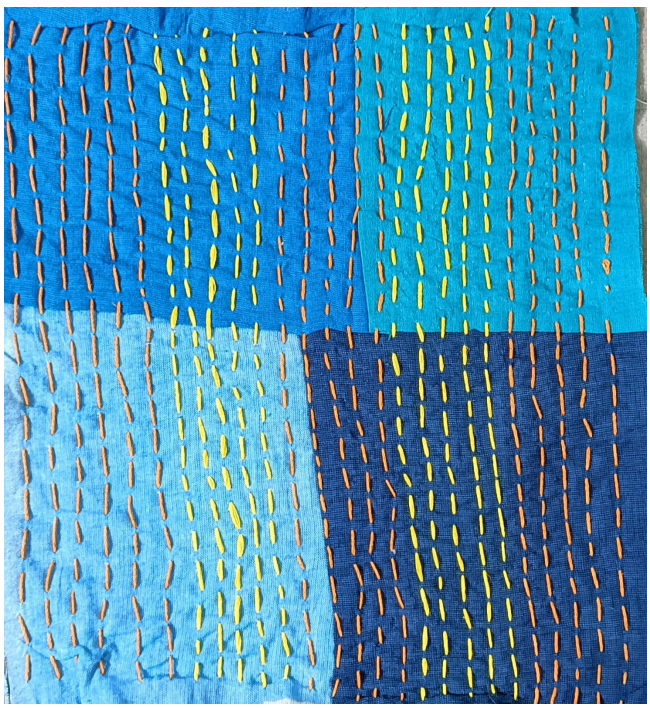

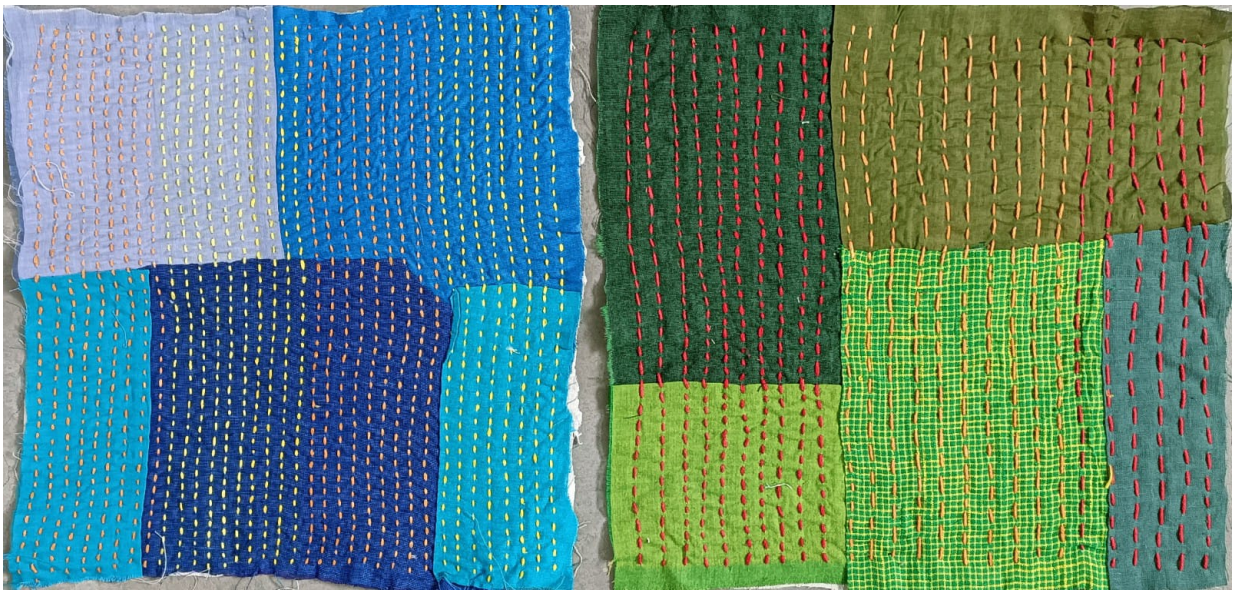

NEXT STEPS - the women are working on 20 x 20 inch squares to improve their speed and skill in quilting as well as refine their colour selection process.
The next training module will be in attempting thematic representations where they will be taught how to colour block an image in abstract and make a design from it for a cushion or a runner or wall art. Their very surroundings of the hills, trees, fields and blue skies can be colour blocked. This will give them scope to ideate from what is around them instead of waiting for a designer to help or copying from Pinterest or such. Colour Theory will be reinforced again.
The quilted swatches will be converted into cushions, totes, runners and pouches by the Porgai tailors in the next session.