

Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, University of Calcutta

Outreach and Livelihood Promotion for Tribal Artisans of Bagdiha Village, Susunia, Bankura

Page | 1

1. Objectives of the Practice

- To promote sustainable livelihoods for marginalised tribal artisans through skill upgradation and market-oriented training.
- To preserve and revitalise traditional bamboo craft as an intangible cultural heritage.
- To facilitate institutional and governmental support for tribal communities.
- To sensitise university students and faculty to grassroots realities through experiential outreach activities.



2. The Context

Bagdiha village of Bankura district is primarily inhabited by Mahali tribal families, traditionally engaged in bamboo craft. Despite possessing rich indigenous knowledge, the community faces severe socio-economic challenges such as outdated designs, limited product diversification, lack of modern tools, high raw material costs, exploitation by middlemen, and restricted access to organised markets.

Further challenges include low educational exposure, lack of awareness of welfare schemes, limited alternative livelihoods, and gradual erosion of traditional craft practices. These issues necessitated a structured institutional intervention combining livelihood promotion, heritage preservation, and community empowerment.

In alignment with **UGC guidelines on extension and outreach activities**, the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, University of Calcutta, initiated this programme in collaboration with WBSCSTOBCDFC, Govt. of West Bengal.

3. The Practice

Organising Institution : Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, University of Calcutta

Collaborating Agency : West Bengal Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes Development & Finance Corporation (WBSCSTOBCDFC), Government of West Bengal

Place :Bagdiha Village (Mahalipara), Susunia, Chhatna Block, Bankura District, West Bengal

Duration : 3–4 June 2023 (Two Days) Time: 10.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.

Major Activities Undertaken

Page | 2

- **Inaugural Ceremony:**
Symbolic plantation of a Bokul tree emphasising sustainability and growth; inauguration of bamboo craft exhibition.
- **Skill Development Workshop:**
Participation of 50 artisans and community members, divided into five groups, provided with bamboo craft toolkits and raw materials.
- **Technical Training:**
Demonstration of traditional and improved bamboo craft techniques by master craftsman Sri Bulu Kalindi.
- **Entrepreneurship Development:**
Participatory lecture on ‘Artisan to Entrepreneur’ covering value addition, pricing, branding, and market linkage.
- **Design and Innovation Exposure:**
Introduction to contemporary bamboo designs and market trends by a designer from the Office of the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, Government of India.
- **Academic Interface:**
Lecture on the social impact of handicrafts and the role of museums as community-engaged institutions.
- **Children’s Painting Workshop:**
Creative engagement of village children encouraging expression, confidence, and community participation.
- **Community Interaction:**
Dialogues with dignitaries on education, women empowerment, SHGs, tourism-linked markets, and Panchayat-level planning.
- **Valedictory Session:**
Distribution of certificates, reflection, and future planning.



4. Evidence of Success

- Participation of **50 tribal artisans and community members** in structured skill training.
- Enhanced awareness regarding **design innovation, entrepreneurship, and market access** among artisans.
- Active engagement of **children and families**, strengthening community involvement.

- Distribution of training kits and raw materials enabling immediate application of skills.
- Strong institutional collaboration between the University, Government agencies, and local organisations.

5. Impact of the Practice

Page | 3

- Improved confidence and skill orientation among bamboo artisans.
- Strengthened linkage between traditional craft and contemporary market demands.
- Increased awareness of government schemes and institutional support mechanisms.
- Reinforcement of the role of university museums as agents of social transformation.
- Enhanced student and faculty exposure to community-based learning and applied heritage studies.

6. Sustainability and Follow-up

To ensure long-term impact, several follow-up initiatives were undertaken:

- **Nutrition Garden Initiative:**
Twenty-five Mahali households developed nutrition gardens with support from Nikhil Banga Kalyan Samity, improving food security.
- **Cloth Distribution Programme:**
Clothing support extended to economically vulnerable tribal families through collaboration with voluntary organisations.
- **Village Development Plan (VDP):**
Preparation of Village Development Plans for Bagdiha and Ramnathpur villages under Susunia Gram Panchayat, focusing on livelihood enhancement and heritage-based development.



7. Challenges and Lessons Learnt

- Need for continuous design and market mentoring beyond short-term workshops.
- Importance of sustained institutional engagement for long-term livelihood impact.
- Necessity of integrating education, nutrition, and livelihood interventions holistically.



8. Notes

This best practice exemplifies how a **university museum can transcend its conventional role** and function as a **community-engaged institution**, contributing to inclusive development,

preservation of indigenous knowledge, and experiential learning in alignment with NAAC and UGC mandates.