

[Cities](#) » [Delhi](#)

Published: August 25, 2014 09:56 IST | Updated: August 25, 2014 09:56 IST

‘Self-help’ is the best help’

Sowmiya Ashok



The Hindu Women learning how to make jewellery at a jewellery unit which is under the Prayas Gender Resource Centre (GRC) at JJ colony in New Delhi.

Photo:Meeta Ahlawat



The Hindu (From left to right) Jyoti Sharma, help desk counselor, Sunandita, project coordinator and Nazma, self help group mobilizer of the Prayas gender resource centre at JJ colony in New Delhi. Photo:Meeta Ahlawat

Saima, who is in her early 20s, is the speediest among her colleagues. She deftly uses the pliers to allow one purple bead to snuggle up against another. She is constructing an elaborate necklace made up of pink, blue, purple and gold beads strung in different layers. The 12-member self-help group that Saima is part of has 10 women and two men who are all working overtime on a hot Friday afternoon to meet a client's order of 1,400 such necklaces in all.

The women sit together under the watchful eyes of Prof. Shyam Swarup Sharma who smiles at them from a portrait on the wall. 'Chaman Self-Help Group' is scrolled on a pale yellow chart next to Prof. Sharma's portrait, who was 38-year-old Rukshana Khatoom's well-wisher.

Two years ago, Rukshana was apprehensive when the idea of heading a jewellery-making unit was mooted to her. She had had no formal education, knew very little Urdu and did not entirely understand the concept of microfinance.

Her first loan from the **Prayas-Gender Resource Centre**, located five minutes away from her workshop, was Rs.50,000. As orders came in, it grew to a couple of lakhs.

"When I first started doing this, I wondered where and how I will sell these products," says this mother of six, showing off her latest design — a pendant made of crisscrossing gold wire. She ensures all her raw materials are nickel-free and will not leave her customers with any allergies.

Ten years ago, Rukshana's family was among many who were rehabilitated at a resettlement colony in Bawana, which community mobilisers in the area say has a 55 per cent Muslim population. The majority of the women walk to industrial areas nearby to earn a living doing odd jobs while men are accused of playing cards during the day and drinking at night.

On Friday, *The Hindu* too noticed several small circles of men playing cards in the by-lanes of Bawana.

It was **Najma, the SHG mobiliser at the GRC who convinced Rukshana** to first join an SHG and then take up jewellery-making. Najma too is a resident of the area and is the "go to" person for any trouble that the women here face. Yet, she too acknowledges that orders are hard to come by regularly for Rukshana, who makes an average of Rs.8000-Rs.10,000 per month.

"If I have a large order, I can get women from more than 200 houses in this neighbourhood involved in some way or other. But with no order, I cannot even manage to engage women from 10 houses," she says.

Printable version | Aug 25, 2014 12:31:59 PM

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/selfhelp-is-the-best-help/article6348947.ece>

© The Hindu