



**VicenteFerrer**

Empowering rural communities



## **Empowering Rural Women Through Sustainable Livelihoods**

### **Project Rationale**

India is a deeply patriarchal society where women face constant discrimination, especially in rural areas. Although women are legally entitled to equal rights in all areas of society, many women are still severely disadvantaged. The Vicente Ferrer Foundation USA (VFF USA) supports Rural Development Trust (RDT), our local partner in India that works to achieve gender equality, stands up against discrimination against women and strives to improve the social and economic situation of women and their families.

In rural India, girls from poor and marginalized backgrounds experience discrimination in access to learning opportunities and economic resources. Many families with limited resources give boys preference in accessing and continuing school. The overall literacy rate in Anantapur district as per 2011 census was 63.57%. Literacy rates among females (53.97%) were much lower than among males (73.02%) due to pervasive discrimination in access to education. This represents a great challenge for women in their access to job opportunities. Financial independence is very important in achieving the empowerment of women.

Anantapur, one of the poorest areas in the state of Andhra Pradesh, is one of the most chronic drought prone regions in India. This harsh climate conditions result in lack of sufficient income for millions of farmers and their families. The lack of access to livelihood opportunities for women without a higher education result in an enormous difficulty to sustain themselves and their families.

### **Project Goal**

**The aim of this project is to empower rural women through sustainable livelihoods, and thus improve their living conditions and those of rural communities.**

There are many women in rural India, who have not finished even their high school education for various socio-economic factors. Due to this situation, many women don't have access to a decent

job and lack a voice in their families and in the society, facing economic and independence challenges.

### **Project Description**

To address this problem, VFF USA is teaching women technical skills, such as tailoring and embroidery, and providing them a sewing machine so they can increase their livelihood options and improve their socio-economic situation. Tailoring is one of the popular occupations preferred by young women who are unable to continue their education.

The Tailoring Project will take place at the RDT vocational training center located at Nagasamudram, Guntakal mandal in Ananthapuram district of Andhra Pradesh. The beneficiaries are 15 women whose average age is 25 years. Nine women are illiterate and six studied until 10th grade. They are working as farm laborers at present, but due to the lack of rainfall, they don't have regular work, which cause economic hardships, including poor nutrition.

Highlights of the project:

- The training will last 6 months.
- Each woman will be provided with a sewing machine and a stool at the beginning of the training. Women would keep their sewing machine after 6 months of successful training.
- Women will receive a small incentive to attend the training as they will not be able to work during this period of time.
- The training will include tailoring skills (blouses, dresses, frocks, bags and shirts), but also basic literacy, primary health and hygiene education.
- Women need to pass an assessment at the end of the training to keep the machine.



## Impact

Our economic development program has a very positive impact on improving the living conditions of women and their families in rural communities. This program is very important also to increase women's self-confidence. It has an additional benefit for children as with additional resources for the family, they will have more opportunities to continue their education and break the cycle of poverty.

To date, over 8,000 women have participated in similar programs promoted by RDT to improve women's livelihoods. Here is a testimonial on how this program has changed lives.

*"I had a desire to learn any skill and to earn money from home itself, so I grabbed this opportunity when RDT and VFF USA provided this tailoring training on September 2020. Their training was very useful for me to have a good life with dignity and with self-confidence. I learnt to stitch many things like blouses, nighties, Panjabi dresses, frocks, coats, shorts etc. I am doing my tailoring work at my home, as some of the villagers are giving me work now a days. Recently, due to COVID-19, the government and RDT approached us to produce masks. They provided cloth and we stitched the masks at our home. I earned \$180 per month through this work. It is a great opportunity for us to use our skills and earn some money from home. We are thankful to RDT, VFF USA and the donor based in the US for supporting women like me to improve my skills and develop our lives. I will always remember them in my life."*Says Soni Bay, 27 years old women who participated in this program

**Would you like to help?** You can support our project directly on the web [www.vffusa.org](http://www.vffusa.org) or contact us for more information at: [info@vffusa.org](mailto:info@vffusa.org) or at (202) 798-5269.

**Thank you for your generosity and kindness!**



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