

## Meri Silai Machine

Program Launch: Swabhiman Kendra, Panipat, Haryana

March 13, 2022

### Introduction

The Martha Farrell Foundation, in partnership with women informal workers and their adolescent daughters, has been supporting a Resource and Support Center for and by women and girls in Bichpadi Village of Panipat, Haryana, since August 2021. The Center, named 'Swabhiman Kendra' by the women and girls, to depict dignity, self-respect and self-reliance, is the first of its kind safe space for women and girls in the village.

Most women informal workers associated with the Center are domestic workers, and were hard hit by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. They were forced to forgo meals, and pull their daughters out of school and into doing domestic work, in order to sustain themselves and their families. They became extremely vulnerable to domestic violence and sexual harassment in the workplace.

A needs assessment study revealed their desire to supplement their incomes as domestic workers through alternative sustainable livelihood opportunities. Sewing presented two advantages:

- It helped them overcome the challenge of mobility. As women and girls, many who step out of the house are subject to harassment and violence by their spouses and families. Sewing was something they could learn at the Center itself, which is recognised by the entire community as a safe, women-only space.
- There is a large market for hand-stitched clothes and piece-rate work in Panipat, including the community and families of participants. With women in the community leading stitching work (a predominantly male-driven field in India), there's also an added sense of safety, empowerment and affordability for dressing well.

Economic empowerment of women through alternative sources of income further means that they would be able to stand up to violence in the home, in public and at the workplace. With economic stability, women also gain the knowledge and strength to empower their daughters to break out of the cycle of violence and gender discrimination in the community, and support them to achieve their aspirations.

### Meri Silai Machine

With Meri Silai Machine, the women domestic workers associated with the Swabhiman Kendra in Panipat, are partnering with Martha Farrell Foundation and MoMAGIC Foundation to take steps towards making their aspirations to learn how to sew a reality.

Under the program, MoMAGIC Foundation has donated two sewing machines and 20 sewing kits to the women and girls of the Swabhiman Kendra, to support them in building their skills and providing them with a small seed grant to be able to kickstart small-scale entrepreneurial ventures from the Center.

On March 13, 2022, the Meri Silai Machine program was inaugurated at the Swabhiman Kendra in Bichpadi village, Panipat. The event was attended by more than 30 women domestic workers, 10+ adolescent daughters, Mr. Parag Jaswal (Chief Minister's Good Governance Associate - Panipat), Mr. Alam Khan (District Coordinator for Self Help Groups - Panipat), Mr. Arun Gupta (CEO - MoMAGIC

Foundation), Mr. Deepak Gupta (Chief People Officer - MoMAGIC Foundation) and the Martha Farrell Foundation program team.

**In Pictures: Program Highlights**



*Symbols of hope, aspirations and a better future: sewing machines and sewing kits donated by the MoMAGIC Foundation for women domestic workers associated with the Swabhiman Kendra in Bichpadi, Panipat, arranged for inauguration.*



*Women domestic workers discuss the significance of the sewing machines in their lives and their plans to use it for a more secure, independent and sustainable future.*



Women domestic workers share with their District Administration representatives and members of MoMAGIC Foundation what the sewing machine means for their futures and families.

*"Hum silai seekhke paise kamayenge, aur un paison se apne liye khud khareedenge. (We will learn to sew, earn and buy something for ourselves)"*

*"Hum silai seekhke factory mein jaayenge, wahaan kaam milta hai silai ka. Hum woh kaam karke paise kamayenge. (Once we learn how to sew, we can go to garment factories nearby and find stitching work, with which we will earn money)"*

*"Hum apni kamayi se apni betiyon ko unke pairon par khada karenge (We will earn and use our earnings to make sure our daughters are independent)"*



Mr. Parag Jaswal, CMGGA - Panipat, shares an anecdote with women domestic workers emphasizing that women have the potential to achieve whatever they set their minds to.

Mr. Alam Khan, District Coordinator - Self Help Groups - Panipat, said, "The point of a community-based group is not to lend one another money. That is just a part of it. The real objective is to fight for your rights. Women are already powerful. It's society that holds them back. Together, you must counter the societal pressure and work consistently for your rights and dignity."

Mr. Arun Gupta, CEO - MoMAGIC Foundation shares that the ideas the women have to use the skills of sewing are very lucrative in this day and age. "There is a ready market on the Internet through platforms such as Flipkart and Amazon, which will help you sell, without having to open a shop. MoMAGIC Foundation will support you in achieving your aspirations," he said.



*Reigning in a Better Future: Adolescent daughters of women domestic workers cut the ribbon on the two sewing machines, formally inaugurate the Meri Silai Machine program.*



*Presentation of Sewing Kits to women domestic workers poised to begin skilling up under the Meri Silai Machine program.*



**Up Next:**

- Women domestic workers in the Resource and Support Center (Swabhiman Kendra) - Panipat will undergo a rigorous training module and skill development in stitching.
- After the completion of their course, women domestic workers will be supported with a small seed grant to begin small entrepreneurial ventures from the center, to supplement their incomes
- The Meri Silai Machine program will also be launched in Gurgaon, Haryana, at the Swabhiman Kendra run with and by women domestic workers of Harijan Basti, in partnership with MoMAGIC Foundation