

# ***WOMEN EMPOWERMENT BY PROVIDING EMPLOYABLE SKILLS***

## **Introduction:**

Established in 1951, the Jesuit Chennai Province, based in Chennai, India, is dedicated to promoting education, social justice, and interfaith dialogue. Echoing Robert Greene's insight, "The future belongs to those who learn more skills and combine them in creative ways," the Province actively addresses social issues, including women, education, health, Tribals, migrants, and skill development. The AHAL (Action for Human Rights and Liberation) Centre, founded in 1999, operates under the Province's vision, focusing on empowering Dalits, particularly the Arunthathiyars, combating poverty and exclusion in northern Tamil Nadu.

AHAL Centre, a beacon of the Province's commitment, has a successful track record of empowering Arunthathiyar women through employable skills, contributing to their economic independence and social upliftment. To expand this impact, additional funds are needed for comprehensive skill development programs, training, resources, and support services. AHAL Centre exemplifies this ethos by conducting classes directly in target villages, ensuring accessibility.

AHAL ensures success by procuring essential resources for skill development, including tailoring machines and computers. Meticulously chosen trainers collaborate with the Centre Staff to identify villages with urgent needs. The Centre prioritizes deserving students, such as dropouts, housewives, widows, aligning seamlessly with the broader mission of the Jesuit Chennai Province.

AHAL's commitment to empowering individuals aligns seamlessly with the Province's vision of a future shaped by creative and skillful individuals. The Centre plays a pivotal role in realizing this vision by significantly contributing to skill development, embodying the Province's holistic approach to social action.

## **Problem Statement:**

The Arunthathiyar women in the Thiruvannamalai and Villupuram districts of Northern Tamil Nadu are grappling with multifaceted challenges that hinder their progress. High unemployment rates, limited educational opportunities, financial dependence, and social discrimination collectively form barriers to their economic empowerment and social upliftment. This situation underscores the pressing need for a targeted intervention to address the root causes of these challenges.

The proposed project seeks to empower Arunthathiyar women by providing tailored training in tailoring and computer skills. These skills are carefully chosen to offer practical and marketable expertise, enabling the women to secure employment or establish their own small-scale businesses. The overarching objective is to break the cycle of poverty, financial dependence, and social discrimination that currently defines their lives.

At the core of the issue is the lack of access to education and skill development, which perpetuates a state of economic vulnerability. The project aims to equip Arunthathiyar women with the tools necessary to secure stable income, thereby improving their living conditions. By doing so, the project endeavours to uplift not only individual women but also their families and communities.

Through this initiative, the project aims to instill a sense of economic self-reliance among Arunthathiyar women. This self-reliance not only addresses immediate financial needs but also contributes to enhanced self-esteem and improved social standing. By breaking down the barriers that restrict these women, the project aspires to create a positive and lasting impact on their lives, fostering a more equitable and inclusive society in the Thiruvannamalai and Villupuram districts of Northern Tamil Nadu.

### Objectives:

- To provide tailoring and computer skills training to 120 Arunthathiyar women (60 – computer & 60 –Tailoring)
- To support the establishment of self-employment ventures for 50% of the trained women
- To facilitate employment opportunities for the remaining 50% of the trained women

### Statistical Profile :

**Name:** AHAL Skill Development Centre

S.NO	ACTIVITY	DIRECT BENEFICIARY		
		Male	Female	Total
1.	Tailoring		74	74
2.	Computer	16	48	64
	<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>138</b>

### Activities :

#### 1. Inauguration:

The AHAL Skill Development Centre marked a significant milestone on November 20 with the inauguration of a tailoring centre and a computer centre at Nallan Pillai Petral. This initiative was made possible through the approval of a budget by ZF Hero Chassis Systems Private Limited (CSR Initiatives). The inaugural function was graced by esteemed guests, including Mr. G. Chandramouli, Plant Head (General Manager), Dr. M. Irudhayaraj, Head HR, and Mr. K. Gopinath, Safety Head. The event witnessed the enthusiastic participation of 74 students in the tailoring courses and 64 students in the computer courses. This inauguration not only symbolizes the expansion of AHAL's

reach but also underscores the vital partnership with ZF Hero Chassis Systems Private Limited in promoting skill development and empowerment within the community.

**2. Tailoring and Computer Classes:**

At the AHAL Skill Development Centre, our tailored curriculum for the October 2023 to March 2024 period spans two key courses: Sewing Machine Operator (SMO) for tailoring and Associate Desktop Publishing (DTP) for computer skills. Operating from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm daily, we follow the syllabus recommended by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) under Skill India 2015. With the support of the Indian Centre for Research and Development of Community Education (ICRDCE), a registered NSDC partner, our centre is committed to delivering high-quality training. Under the guidance of Rev. Fr. Xavier Alphonse SJ, the Director and Founder of ICRDCE, the computer course covers essential software applications, while the tailoring course focuses on a range of practical skills, including embroidering and garment stitching. Furthermore, we prioritize holistic development by incorporating life coping skills training into our daily schedule, with dedicated sessions thrice a week led by trained staff. This holistic approach ensures that our students not only acquire technical expertise but also develop essential life skills, contributing to their overall personal and professional growth.

**3. Workshop on employment opportunities and Marketing and Finance:**

On the 16th of December, a collaborative effort between Loyola Institute of Business Administration, Chennai, and the AHAL Centre culminated in a workshop focusing on Employment Opportunities, Entrepreneurial Initiatives, and Marketing. The event, hosted at the AHAL Centre, witnessed active participation from students enrolled in both the Computer and Tailoring courses. This initiative underscores our commitment to providing comprehensive education, ensuring that students are not only equipped with technical skills but also gain insights into real-world employment prospects and entrepreneurial avenues. The workshop served as a platform for students to explore and understand the dynamic intersections of their respective fields in the broader business landscape.

**4. Exposure Visit:**

On the 27th of January, the staff and students of the AHAL Skill Development Centre embarked on a valuable exposure program by attending South India's Biggest Business Conclave & Exhibition for SC/ST entrepreneurs at the Chennai Trade Centre. This enriching experience provided a platform for over 350 exhibitors to showcase their diverse range of products, featuring over 5000 items on display. The event drew more than 2000 visitors, creating a dynamic environment for networking and learning. This initiative aligns with our commitment to offering holistic education, ensuring that our students gain practical insights into the broader business landscape and fostering a spirit of entrepreneurship among them.

**5. Staff Capacitation:**

The tailoring and computer staff of our center recently participated in a capacitation program organized by Loyola Institute of Business Administration (LIBA) at Dhyana Ashram. This initiative aimed to enhance their skills in tailoring techniques, computer education, and teaching methodologies. The program reflects our commitment to

continuous improvement and ensuring our staff remains at the forefront of educational practices, ultimately benefiting the students at our center.

#### **6. Valedictory Programme :**

On January 18, 2024, the AHAL Skill Development Centre held its Convocation Day, a momentous occasion that not only acknowledged the academic accomplishments but significantly boosted the confidence of our students. A total of 64 students received certification for completing the basic computer course (ADTP), while 74 students earned recognition as certified tailors through the completion of the SMO course. The esteemed presence of Chief Guests, including Rev. Fr. Ilanko Xavier, and other notable figures, added to the celebratory atmosphere. This event marked more than just the receipt of certificates; it was a transformative experience that instilled a sense of achievement akin to receiving a degree, empowering our students as they venture into new professional endeavours with heightened confidence.

### **OUTCOME OF THE PROJECT:**

- **Enhanced Technical Skills:** Trained Arunthathiyar women have acquired proficiency in tailoring and computer skills, positioning them for employment or self-employment opportunities in these fields.
- **Increased Employability:** The project has significantly improved the employability of Arunthathiyar women. 50% of participants have successfully established their own self-employment ventures, while the remaining 50% secured employment opportunities.
- **Entrepreneurial Knowledge:** Participants gained valuable knowledge and skills in entrepreneurship and marketing, empowering them to manage businesses effectively, attract customers, and generate sustainable income.
- **Improved Livelihoods:** The project has resulted in improved livelihoods for trained women, enabling them to generate income through self-employment or secure employment opportunities. This has led to increased financial stability and better living conditions for them and their families.
- **Increased Financial Independence:** Through self-employment ventures and employment opportunities, the project has contributed to the financial independence of Arunthathiyar women, reducing reliance on external sources and empowering them to make financial decisions for themselves and their families.
- **Social Recognition:** The project elevated the social status of Arunthathiyar women by providing opportunities to showcase their skills and contributions. This challenges social stigma and discrimination, gaining recognition within their communities.

### **IMPACT OF THE PROJECT:**

- **Economic Empowerment:** The project has significantly economically empowered Arunthathiyar women, providing means for sustainable income, improving financial stability, and contributing to the economic growth of households and communities.
- **Social Empowerment:** Through enhanced skills, employment opportunities, and increased social recognition, Arunthathiyar women are empowered to actively participate in decision-making processes, challenge social norms, and advocate for their rights, fostering social inclusion.

- **Gender Equality :** By addressing specific needs and challenges faced by Arunthathiyar women, providing equal access to skills training, employment, and self-employment opportunities, the project contributes to gender equality and empowerment.
- **Community Development:** The project positively impacts overall community development by creating job opportunities, encouraging entrepreneurial spirit, and fostering economic growth within Thiruvannamalai and Villupuram districts.
- **Sustainable Change:** Focused on skill development and empowerment, the project created long-term sustainable change by equipping Arunthathiyar women with tools and resources for livelihoods, supporting families, and contributing to socio-economic development.

## CONCLUSION:

The project, aimed at empowering Arunthathiyar women through tailoring and computer skills, has successfully achieved its objectives. The outcomes include enhanced technical skills, increased employability, entrepreneurial knowledge, improved livelihoods, financial independence, and social recognition. The impact extends to economic and social empowerment, gender equality, community development, and the initiation of sustainable change. The successful implementation of this project fosters a more inclusive society, breaking the cycle of poverty and discrimination, enabling Arunthathiyar women to lead dignified lives and contribute positively to their families and communities. Overall, the project represents a significant step toward building a more equitable and empowered community.

## Case Studies:

### 1. Ms. Asha Rani - Computer

#### AHAL Skill Development Centre - Transforming Lives Through Computer Training

#### Background:

Asha Rani, a 35-year-old resident of Vedanatham village, found herself entangled in the challenges of poverty from an early age. Married to Mr. Raja at 21, Asha spent the past 14 years grappling with the persistent struggle to elevate her family's standard of living.

#### Challenges:

Despite her relentless efforts, securing stable employment remained an elusive goal for Asha. The impact of economic hardships cast a shadow on her family, leading to a myriad of difficulties. The need for a breakthrough became apparent as Asha sought avenues for personal and familial advancement.



**Turning Point:**

Asha's life took a transformative turn when she made the pivotal decision to enroll in the computer training program offered by the AHAL Skill Development Centre. This comprehensive program addressed a spectrum of skills, including Tamil typing, English typing, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft PowerPoint, PageMaker, Adobe Photoshop, and Corel Draw, providing her with a diverse and practical set of computer skills.

**Skill Development and Life Skills:**

Beyond technical proficiency, the training program at AHAL fortified Asha's life skills. The centre imparted a robust foundation in communication, decision-making, problem-solving, and resilience, preparing her not just for the professional landscape but for the broader challenges of life.

**Professional Breakthrough:**

Empowered with her newfound skills, Asha secured a position as a computer operator in a rehabilitation center, earning a monthly income of 15,000. This employment not only brought financial stability to her family but also instilled a profound sense of confidence and purpose in Asha's life.

**Socio-Economic Impact:**

The impact of Asha's training extended far beyond personal success, significantly improving her family's socio-economic status. The skills acquired in the program elevated their standard of living and, importantly, positively influenced the education of her children. The ripple effect of empowerment within her household is evident in the holistic transformation of their socio-economic conditions.

**Conclusion:**

Asha Rani's journey serves as a powerful case study in the transformative potential of skill development initiatives. The AHAL Skill Development Centre played a pivotal role in not just imparting technical skills but in empowering Asha to secure stable employment, elevate her family's living conditions, and contribute meaningfully to her children's education. This comprehensive case study underscores the profound impact that accessible and comprehensive skill training programs can have on individuals and communities facing socio-economic challenges.

## **2. Ms. Mary – Tailoring**

### **Empowering Transformation through Tailoring at AHAL Skill Development Centre**



#### **Background:**

Mary, a resident of Su. Paapambaadi village, embarked on a transformative journey with AHAL Skill Development Centre. Having completed eighth grade, she entered the responsibilities of marriage and embraced her role as a dedicated mother to a daughter. Financial constraints initially led Mary to manage household chores while her husband worked as a Sofa mender to sustain the family.

#### **Discovery of Opportunity:**

Mary's path took a new direction when AHAL Skill Development Centre introduced a tailoring training program in her village. Recognizing the potential for skill acquisition, Mary seized the opportunity and enrolled with a keen interest in learning blouse stitching, top creation, pants tailoring, and saree petticoat making.

#### **Turning Point:**

Enrolling in the tailoring program marked a turning point in Mary's life. Beyond acquiring valuable tailoring skills, the program became a catalyst for personal growth and empowerment. Mary's dedication and eagerness to learn showcased a remarkable commitment to enhancing her abilities.

#### **Impact on Family Dynamics:**

The newfound skills empowered Mary to contribute not only to her family's income but also to the overall well-being of her household. The training provided by AHAL Skill Development Centre became a source of financial independence, breaking the barriers that previously confined Mary to household chores.

#### **Holistic Empowerment:**

AHAL's tailoring program not only equipped Mary with technical expertise but also instilled a sense of self-reliance and independence. Through skill development, Mary not only enhanced her capabilities but also became a role model within her community, showcasing the transformative potential of accessible skill training.

#### **Conclusion:**

Mary's journey with AHAL Skill Development Centre stands as a testament to the transformative impact of skill acquisition on individuals and communities. Her commitment to learning and the opportunities provided by the tailoring program have not only elevated her personal and financial status but have also contributed to reshaping the dynamics of her family.

This case study underscores the profound ripple effect that accessible skill development can have in empowering individuals and fostering holistic growth within communities.

