

Training Needs of Rural Women in Traditional Textile Crafts

Rashmi Dubey¹, Jaya Verma², Aishwarya Singh² & Vinita Singh³

Abstract: -

Traditional textile crafts such as handloom weaving, embroidery, tie-and-dye, block printing, and appliqué work form an integral part of rural livelihoods, particularly for women, across many parts of India and other developing countries. Despite possessing inherited skills passed down through generations, rural women artisans often lack exposure to improved techniques, quality standards, design innovation, and market linkages that could enhance the income-generating potential of their craft. This article examines the concept and importance of training needs assessment in the context of traditional textile crafts, identifies the major skill and knowledge gaps commonly observed among rural women artisans, and discusses the role of extension education in bridging these gaps. The article further suggests a structured framework for organizing need-based training programmes and outlines practical recommendations for extension functionaries, policymakers, and development agencies working towards the empowerment of rural women through textile-based livelihoods.

1. Introduction:

Textile craft has historically been a source of both cultural identity and economic sustenance in rural communities. Rural women, in particular, have played a central role in sustaining traditional textile practices such as weaving, spinning, dyeing, embroidery, and various forms of surface ornamentation. These crafts are often practised

Rashmi Dubey¹, Jaya Verma², Aishwarya Singh² & Vinita Singh³

¹PhD Scholar, Department of Apparel & Textile Science, College of Community Science,

²Teaching Associate, Department of Extension Education & Communication Management,
College of Community Science,

³Associate Professor, Department of Food Science and Nutrition, College of Community
Science,

Chandra Shekhar Azad University of Agriculture & Technology, Kanpur

as home-based, part-time, or seasonal activities that supplement household income while allowing women to remain close to their domestic responsibilities.

However, with increasing market competition, changing consumer preferences, and the entry of power-loom and machine-made products, traditional craft practices face the risk of stagnation or decline. Rural women artisans frequently continue to use outdated tools, traditional colour palettes, and conventional designs, largely due to limited access to updated knowledge, training, and exposure. Extension education, which focuses on the transfer of scientific and technical knowledge to rural populations through need-based, participatory approaches, offers a practical mechanism to address these gaps. Identifying the specific training needs of rural women in textile crafts is therefore the first and most critical step towards designing effective capacity-building interventions.

2. Concept of Training Needs Assessment

Training Needs Assessment (TNA) refers to the systematic process of identifying gaps between the existing knowledge, skills, and attitudes of a target group and the level required to perform a task efficiently. In the context of traditional textile crafts, TNA helps extension personnel understand what rural women artisans already know, what they wish to learn, and what skills would most improve

their productivity, product quality, and income.

A sound training needs assessment for textile crafts typically considers the following dimensions:

- ☞ Technical skill gaps – such as weaving techniques, dye application, stitch variety, and finishing methods.
- ☞ Knowledge gaps – awareness of new designs, colour trends, quality standards, and government schemes.
- ☞ Entrepreneurial gaps – costing, pricing, marketing, packaging, and record-keeping.
- ☞ Attitudinal aspects – willingness to adopt new methods, confidence in decision-making, and openness to group-based work.

3. Commonly Identified Training Needs

Field-level observations and extension studies across rural textile clusters generally point to a recurring set of training needs among women artisans. These needs vary somewhat by craft type but tend to fall into similar broad categories, summarized in **Table 1** below.

Beyond craft-specific needs, several cross-cutting training requirements are commonly reported, including improved knowledge of natural and eco-friendly dyeing methods, use of simple tools and improved equipment to reduce drudgery, product

diversification to suit contemporary markets, quality control and standardization, costing and pricing of finished products, and basic digital literacy for online marketing and access to government portals.

- ☞ Forming and strengthening Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to enable collective learning, bulk procurement of raw material, and joint marketing.
- ☞ Linking artisans with government

Table 1: Illustrative Training Needs Across Major Traditional Textile Crafts

S. No.	Traditional Textile Craft	Key Training Need Identified	Priority
1	Handloom weaving	Design diversification, use of improved looms, dyeing techniques	High
2	Embroidery (regional stitches)	Colour combination, new stitch patterns, product finishing	High
3	Tie-and-dye / Bandhani	Natural dye use, quality control, uniform patterning	Medium
4	Block printing	Block carving, colour fastness, eco-friendly dyes	Medium
5	Appliqué and patchwork	Machine handling, costing, marketing of finished products	Medium
6	Natural fibre processing	Fibre grading, spinning techniques, value addition	High

4. Role of Extension Education in Addressing These Needs

Extension education serves as the vital link between research institutions, government schemes, and rural artisans. Its role in addressing the training needs identified above can be understood through the following functions:

- ☞ Organizing skill-upgradation camps and hands-on demonstrations in weaving, dyeing, and embroidery techniques.
- ☞ Facilitating exposure visits to craft clusters, exhibitions, and trade fairs to expose artisans to new designs and market trends.

schemes related to skill development, credit facilities, and craft promotion.

- ☞ Introducing simple record-keeping and costing practices to improve financial management of craft-based enterprises.
- ☞ Encouraging adoption of eco-friendly and sustainable practices, including natural dyes and low-drudgery tools.

5. Suggested Framework for Need-Based Training Programmes

Based on the training needs identified, extension agencies may consider adopting a structured, phase-wise approach when designing training interventions for rural women in traditional textile crafts:

- ☞ Phase 1 – Baseline survey and participatory identification of skill gaps within the target craft cluster.
- ☞ Phase 2 – Short-duration, hands-on training modules focusing on the most urgent technical gaps identified.
- ☞ Phase 3 – Follow-up mentoring and exposure visits to reinforce learning and encourage peer exchange.
- ☞ Phase 4 – Market linkage support, including branding, packaging guidance, and access to digital selling platforms.
- ☞ Phase 5 – Periodic evaluation of training impact on income, product quality, and adoption of new practices.

6. Conclusion

Traditional textile crafts represent a valuable but often under-supported avenue for rural women's economic empowerment. A clear understanding of their training needs spanning technical skills, market knowledge, and entrepreneurial capacity — is essential for designing extension programmes that are relevant, practical, and impactful. Strengthening the extension education framework around these needs can help preserve traditional craft heritage while simultaneously enhancing the livelihoods and self-reliance of rural women artisans. Coordinated efforts between extension agencies, craft development boards, and financial institutions will be necessary to

translate identified training needs into sustained skill development and income improvement at the grassroots level.

References

1. Adisa, B. O., Adeokun, A. O., & Oladoja, M. A. (2006). The effects of socio-economic factors on perceived adequacy of training received by women in agriculture in Ijebu and Remo Divisions of Ogun State, Nigeria. *Journal of Agricultural Extension*, 9.
2. Bang, A. L., Engholm, G., Lervad, S., Nosch, M.-L., & Skjold, E. (2024). Textile craft as empowerment: Shared research and craft activities around textiles in museums in Denmark. *Dress: The Journal of the Costume Society of America*, 50(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/03612112.2024.2370126>
3. Hasnaen, S. L. ul., Parvez, Z., & Syed, K. (2023). Empowering rural women through skill development: A pathway to sustainable livelihoods. *Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(4), 306–318. <https://doi.org/10.55737/qjss.61378367>
4. Kumar, S., Sharma, R. K., Sinha, R. R. K., Kumar, S., & Ranjan, S. (2021). Training needs assessment of farm

women in dairying practices. Indian Journal of Animal Sciences, 90(11).
<https://doi.org/10.56093/ijans.v90i11.111572>

5. Pateriya, Y., Bharti, A. K., Kumar, Y., & Sonu, K. (2026). Assessing the perceived training needs of farm women on modern crop technologies in Jhansi district. Indian Journal of Extension Education, 62(1), 80–85.
<https://doi.org/10.48165/IJEE.2026.62113>

