

PRESS RELEASE

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INDUS HERITAGE TRUST RECEIVES JAPANESE GRANT THROUGH THE WORLD BANK TO IMPROVE LIVELIHOODS OF MARGINALIZED GRASSROOTS LEVEL ARTISANS IN PAKISTAN

The World Bank, as administrator of grant funds provided by the Government of Japan under the Japan Social Development Fund, has signed a Grant Agreement of US Dollars 2.8 million with Indus Heritage Trust (IHT), a Pakistani NGO. A grant signing ceremony was held today, 21st May 2014, at the World Bank Country Office in Islamabad where the Grant Agreement was signed by the World Bank Country Director, Mr Rachid Benmassaoud and Ms. Siddiqah Malik, Chairperson of IHT. The Economic Counsellor from the Embassy of Japan, Mr Naoaki Kamoshida and Economic Advisor, Ms Shoko Fujita were present at the event. Other people present included all the IHT trustees and Mrs. Susan Heyward, wife of the Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan who is the Patron for IHT.

This grant will fund a four years project *Rang* for “*Developing Artisanal Livelihoods in Rural Pakistan*”. The project *Rang* aims at improving the livelihoods of poor and marginalized artisans in southern Punjab and Sindh, and saving the cultural heritage of handloom textiles and embroidery work of the area. This project also takes an innovative approach to support artisans through the entire production and marketing process from helping the artisan organise into groups and enterprises; improvements in designs, input materials and production techniques; access to financial services; marketing, trade facilitation and support services; and skills enhancement and training at every stage of the process.

In Pakistan, crafts and related trades comprise 15 percent of formal sector jobs, and 31 percent of informal sector jobs. Even more important, crafts is a sector dominated by women workers --- 54 percent of informal sector craft jobs are filled by women.

The IHT, together with the World Bank, organized a Regional Creative Industries Stakeholder Consultation in November 2012. It was attended by major NGOs from SAARC countries engaged in preserving cultural heritage. The Conference highlighted that Pakistan is the hub of best embroideries in the region and this heritage was in danger of dying due to the loss of livelihood of its grassroots level artisans. The *Rang* project endeavours to enhance the livelihood of grassroots level artisans as the best sustainable approach to poverty alleviation and to preserve national heritage of handloom textiles and embroidery in the area. The

project will focus on five districts each in southern Punjab and Sindh that have rich heritage in handloom textile and embroidery and are in greatest danger of losing it.

The World Bank has been working on similar projects in several countries of the region and recognizes the valuable contribution that can be made by the artisanal sector to the economy and cultural heritage of a nation. IHT's interest is to preserve the country's cultural heritage by ensuring the growth and progress of the "creative industries" and bringing about a much-needed enhancement of artisanal livelihoods.

In line with the Government of Pakistan's efforts to address poverty at the grassroots, the *Rang* project will directly benefit 2,600 artisans, 15,600 dependent family members and indirectly to many more families and households across 10 districts of Pakistan. At least 70% of the beneficiaries are expected to be women.

The lasting impact of the project will be the recognition of the "creative industries" and rich cultural heritage of Pakistan and rebuilding livelihoods of artisan families whose income and survival depend on traditional crafts.

