

"When my husband went to jail, I had to start sewing again, but I didn't have any machine or capital. Oxfam then came to me as a life-saver," said Asma.

She had some knowledge of sewing but did not know about the colours and designs that the market demands.

"After taking training on handicrafts from Oxfam, I started to sell those items in the local markets," she said, adding that she is now planning to expand her business.

Asma was able to repair her house and buy a sewing machine with the money she earned.

Like Roleys and Asma, a total of 460 women took the training from Oxfam under a project titled, "Emergency food security and vulnerable livelihood project," which aims to empower women through livelihood activities.

Initially, the participants were given training and also some capital to start their business.

"We regularly monitor their activities and also link the products with the local market," said

Alstarm Najar, a volunteer of the project.

Those who had basic knowledge of sewing were chosen for the programme, and then training was given to increase their expertise and knowledge on colour and design.

Md. Mostafa Ali, Project Manager of Emergency, Oxfam, mentioned that, considering the local context, livelihood improvement and reduced vulnerability as per participants' needs, Oxfam transferred skills, assets, and technology for the development and economic empowerment of women and the youth.

"With the proper guidance and technical support of Oxfam, targeted participants have enhanced their skills and resources to increase income to contribute to their families, play an active role in family decision-making and create the opportunity of entrepreneurship development," he said.

Asma and Roleys shared that now they are disseminating their knowledge to other women as the demand for handicraft products is increasing.



A woman is seen working on a red lace garment.
PHOTO: RAHMO SHARON