Secret Projects: Our Guide

This guide explains our philosophy and business model and the opportunities and benefits of working/partnering with us.
Secret Projects
Who are we?

- We empower women in India through training and the making and selling of clothing and homeware
- We are a Community Benefit Society – Secret Projects Community Benefit Society (SPCBS) with a base in the UK and a wholly owned profit-making subsidiary company in India; Social Power India (SPI)
- Secret Projects is run by a team of 3 female Directors who have many years of business, social and charity experience
The Need

There are millions of women in India who have few or no opportunities to earn an income and many of those who are employed, often find themselves in low paid and unethical positions.

Determined to tackle this challenge, we sought to offer women in India a different way to make a living, one that would use their existing skills, as well as helping to develop new ones.

“Let us send a clear message to the world that women’s rights are human rights, and that gender equality is central to all the Sustainable Development Goals”.

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the United Nations General Assembly
Our Vision

A world where all women have the confidence and resources to make choices, thrive and contribute to the strengthening of their communities.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Are a set of 17 global goals provided by the UN to unite global stakeholders in the work towards a better and more sustainable future for everyone. The SDG's provide a historic opportunity for international partnership in order to address the global challenges the world faces, such as extreme poverty, environment degradation, injustice and discrimination.

Secret Projects work directly contributes to goals 1, 5 and 8 of the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development.
Our Values... a fundamental part of how we operate as an organisation

- We have self-belief
- We support one another
- We believe in teamwork
- We persist
- We think and think again
- We trust our instinct
- We take pride in everything we do
- We work with joy
- We have an entrepreneurial mindset and...
- We celebrate leadership
What we do and our impact areas – UK

What we do

We are a Community Benefit Society set up to benefit communities of marginalised women in India. We work with our subsidiary company in India (Social Power India) to create and support sustainable livelihoods and an equitable world.

Our impact areas

- **Social Investor Platform**: We provide a platform for social investors who want to invest in women’s empowerment and the creation of sustainable livelihoods.

- **Linkages**: We connect our Maker communities with the global marketplace (Business to customer/ business to business) by creating market linkages.

- **WFTO**: We work within the framework of World Fair Trade Organisation as a member to achieve fair wages and acceptable working standards and we are working towards minimal waste.

- **Secret Leaders/Influencers**: We are a vehicle for people who want to make a difference through their own personal and business networks, using their skills, passion and creativity.
What we do and our impact areas – UK Continued...

Our impact areas cont...

• **Experiences:** We offer a variety of ways that our Makers and customers can meet and work together.

• **Secret Leaders/Influencers:** We are a vehicle for people who want to make a difference through their own personal and business networks, using their skills, passion and creativity.

• **Experiences:** We offer a variety of ways that our Makers and customers can meet and work together.

• **Employees of SPCBS:** We provide flexible employment opportunities for people of all ages to allow them to carry out other caring roles within their families. Secret Projects employees are supported to grow and develop within their roles.

• We give support to other businesses who work towards a similar vision as ours based anywhere in the world. We share our journey to date and work together to explore the challenges that they face in working towards their vision.

• We offer UK profit making businesses support to explore opportunities for international trade, particularly in India.
What we do and our impact areas – India

What we do

SPI enables sustainable livelihoods towards an equitable world

Our impact areas

• **Training:** We have developed and run our own training programme and we create and sell customised training packages to collaborating organisations.

• **Professionalisation:** We support a rise in quality of production and promote the concept of selling and marketing.

• **Enterprise Development:** We mentor our Maker Communities to capitalise on the opportunities available to them locally by creating and driving their own micro-enterprises.

• **Leadership:** We identify emerging leaders within our Maker Communities and support their development.
Our impact areas cont...

• **Sales**: Maker Communities produce clothing and homeware that are sold to a global market through linkages created by our parent company, Secret Projects Community Benefit Society UK.

• **WFTO**: We work within the framework of the World Fair Trade Organisation as a member to achieve fair wages and acceptable working standards and we are working towards minimal waste.

• **Employees of SPI**: We provide flexible employment opportunities for people of all ages to allow them to carry out other caring roles within their families. Secret Project employees are supported to grow and develop within their roles.

• We give support to other businesses who work towards a similar vision as ours based anywhere in the world. We share our journey to date and work together to explore the challenges that they face in working towards their vision.
Our Business Model

Secret Projects Community Benefit Society (SPCBS) is a social enterprise. A social enterprise is an organisation that applies business models to solve social issues.

As a social enterprise, Secret Projects operates a framework, which allows the organisation to generate positive change to our community (achieve our social vision) while maintaining healthy financial returns to our Members/Shareholders.

To maintain a balance between positive change and healthy financial returns, SPCBS has developed a business model, **which is a hybrid of three business models:**

- Cooperative Business
- Entrepreneur Support
- Market Linkage

*Please read on for further details*
Similar to a cooperative, the CBS is owned by its Members/Shareholders – individuals and companies who share Secret Projects vision of a world where all women have the confidence and resources to make choices, thrive and contribute to the strengthening of their communities. They are social investors with a shared goal to achieve positive social impact within the communities they benefit, while receiving moderate interest on their investment when profits are generated by the company in the future.

By purchasing shares in SPCBS, all members subscribe to the rules of the society.
To achieve its social vision, SPCBS encourages entrepreneurship amongst women by providing training, and commercialisation through our **four stage Virtual Training for Empowerment Programme**.

Working closely with established and reputable Indian based charities and NGOs, we link up with communities of women who have good sewing skills who want to be able to earn a living from their expertise, but need support to find income generating opportunities. These women become part of our Maker Community, forming local Maker Groups and, with our guidance, learn how to make Secret Projects clothing and homeware, known as Secret Products. Each woman becomes part of our 4 stage Virtual Training for Empowerment Programme that not only provides a route to both the domestic and international sales markets, but also gives each member the tools to be able to form their own micro-enterprises, if this is something they want to pursue.
SPCBS has a subsidiary in India, Social Power India (SPI), an income-generating and profit-making arm of the business, which helps it to achieve its objective of maintaining healthy financial returns. The business provides access to international and local markets through SPI by using its e-commerce platform, powered by Shopify to:

- Market products produced by Secret Projects Maker Community.
- Linking our customers with our Maker Community by the promotion and selling of Secret Projects travel experiences for teachers, artists and tourists to the heart of our project in India.

Linking with big businesses

- Our pro bono law firm is international law firm Hogan Lovells
- We enjoy a close relationship with the UK’s leading cause based crowdfunding platform, Crowdfunder
- Joining up with Royal Sun Alliance Accenture India team was a productive link up for Secret Projects

Linking with universities

- We develop working relationships with universities providing access to our Maker Community to conduct research programmes
- Universities we have worked with include: Christ Canterbury Christ Church University (UK), Goldsmiths (UK), London Business School (UK), UCL and Westminster University (UK), Madras College of Social Work, India.
The Four Stages of Virtual Training for Empowerment Programme (VTFEP)

Stage 1 - Training
Makers learn how to make foldable Secret Products, e.g. Secret Pillows through our virtual training hub

Stage 2 - Professionalism
Makers are supported to produce products of the highest export standards

Stage 3 - Enterprise Development
Makers are coached to uncover local opportunities to generate an income

Stage 4 - Leadership
Emerging leaders are encouraged to develop their leadership skills and grow their confidence
Trained over 500 women

Trained in 5 India states

15 Maker Leaders have emerged

We have established a regular monthly payment date for Makers via bank transfer

Established relationships with 7 Indian NGOs

We have an ongoing relationship with 150 Makers who are actively making and earning

A sustainable training model has emerged where Makers train new Makers

Our Makers have earned a total of £62,000

Two of our Maker Groups now rent their own unit and have formed their own micro enterprise
Shylaja completed our 4 stage *Training for Empowerment Programme* and succeeded *in securing a unit to* open her dream tailoring shop. Click **HERE** to watch a 2-minute interview where Shylaja explains the support Secret Projects has given her.

Sadly, due to COVID-19 lockdown in Bengaluru, where Shylaja has her unit, she was unable to maintain the rent when orders stopped. We are now working hard with Shylaja to help her begin to re-grow her business.
'The role of women in households with a non-equitable gender setting makes it challenging for women to fit into a factory or a manufacturing unit in a given time frame. Care for elderly, children and complying to societal norms of refraining from venturing out of the home, are key challenges women in the low/no income communities face. In the given context, SPI has formed a model of reaching out to the households through NGO networks and Women Group Leaders. Trainings is undertaken within their communities and payments are made directly to their bank accounts – making it viable and more accessible for women to earn an income.

Connecting global customers with the Makers through a personal Maker letter with every product, customer trips and customer group calls, gives us a great way of connecting the 2 groups and assists us in working towards our vision'.

_Nirmala Rani – Country Director, Social Power India_
What are the benefits for business to work with Secret Projects?

• We believe we are a perfect fit for organisations that believe in innovation, creativity and the power of social entrepreneurship. Our business model not only creates profit but drives social change.

• We give an organisation the chance to be part of the global partnership for the Sustainable Development Goals.

• We can offer exciting opportunities for employees and other stakeholders to engage with us as a partnership, through product sales and involvement in our campaigns.

• We can share our expertise and work with you on campaigns centred around women, including International Women's Day (March 8th).

• We bridge stakeholder groups in the UK and India with a shared vision of a more equitable world.

• Most of all, we want to understand your specific objectives to explore how working with Secret Projects might help you.
We invite you to start a conversation with us.

Thank you

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