CREATIVITY, THE PATH TO ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

"I was unable to continue my education because of my financial problems..." explains eighteen year old Sana. Her father works as a carpenter but with an ailing body and three children he finds it hard to make two ends meet. Her mother tries to support the family by stitching neighbour's clothes. Sana says, *"I have seen my family struggle for years together and I often get frustrated with my inability to help my family. I was looking for an opportunity to contribute when a friend of mine told me about the Arts and Crafts classes run by CEQUINs Gender Resource Centre."*

To learn a skill without additional financial burden was just the opportunity Sana was looking for to bring some relief to her family. She learnt how to make stuffed teddy bear toys and gel candles in the six month vocational education training. CEQUIN believes that vocational training must translate into economic empowerment. The strategy being employed in these trainings is to empower women with business management skills and make them employable. Therefore, Sana was guided at each step for marketing the products she created. She managed to sell the big Teddy bears at the rate of Rs.350 and the small ones at the rate of Rs.250. She even succeeded in selling 15 gel candles for Rs.50 each.

Sana's joy is explicit in her words, *"I am so relieved that I am finally helping my family. I realize the value of being skilled and educated. So I am using some money to complete my education and with the remaining I am continuing to make soft toys which I shall continue to market."*