



ART EMPOWERING WOMEN

# Kundakala C.I.C. Our work and impact

September 2024

Supported by:





Kundakala C.I.C. was founded in memory of my mother, the late Indian artist Kunda Kirloskar, to mitigate the post pandemic cost-of-living crisis. The idea was (and still is) to print Kunda's designs on fabric and provide tailoring skills and enterprise support to ethnic minority women, enabling them to become professional seamstresses. We felt that this would help them tackle the crisis by saving money, reducing debt, and opening a new avenue of income generation.

In 2022 we ran two pilots in the London Boroughs of Barnet and Hackney supporting 20 women through a six-month programme and successfully proved our concept.

Today, in 2024, we are slowly expanding across London, supporting around 150+ ethnic minority women, and helping some of them set up their own microbusinesses. We feel the time is now right to talk about our work and its impact on the women we support.



Poornima Kirloskar-Saini  
Founder & CEO





# 01 Addressing a proven need

There is a wealth of evidence highlighting how ethnicity affects people's life chances in the UK, and that racial disparity exists in the context of health and mental health outcomes, income, and wider social integration. Black and minority ethnic people are 2.5 times more likely to be in relative poverty than their white counterparts. Ethnic minority women are one of the groups most excluded from the workplace, often facing structural and cultural barriers. Worklessness and poverty has been proved to have a detrimental effect on health and wellbeing. Feeling socially isolated limits access to services and support.

We have identified a gap in the supply of culture-specific clothing across the UK's mainstream retail outlets. Our newly trained women can exploit this gap and offer their tailoring skills, working from home whilst not compromising on caring responsibilities or cultural considerations.



As a melanated person, when I buy dresses and skirts, they are not shapely enough for my figure. To me it just looks like I don't know how to put on my clothes. I don't see why I should put up with it when I have the capabilities of creating my own clothes that suit my shape. - K



## 02 Our programmes



### Make and Mend

An entry level 6-month programme where participants are taught how to use a sewing machine to make products such as tote bags, purses, cosmetic bags and garments for themselves. Participants are also offered one-to-one employability support followed by group workshops on starting their microbusinesses. Upon graduation they are given a sewing machine to take home.



### Alterations and Upcycle

Graduates of the Make and Mend are invited to this advanced programme where under the supervision of a tailoring tutor they make products from fabrics (such as sarees) that are donated to us. They are also trained on alterations and repairs and are given paid commissions. We also provide a programme of advice, guidance and signposting from linked community, training and enterprise organisations.





## The Kundakala Collective

A newly established co-operative for graduates from our programmes. Once women complete both programmes with us they can attend an open day to join. The Collective offers a repairs service locally, coordinating commissions for members. We are also starting to market and sell the garments they produce through our online marketplace and local markets.

## Kundakala Community Champions Network

Our paid workforce of Kundakala graduates who function as outreach workers and assistant tutors in our programmes. All women who finish the Make and Mend programme can apply to join the network.





## 03 Our Kundakala cohort

To date, we have supported 150 ethnic minority women from the London Boroughs of Barnet, Hackney, Lambeth and Camden. Most of the women are economic migrants or refugees from a broad mix of backgrounds such as Afro-Caribbean, Afghani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Egyptian, Eritrean, Ghanaian, Indian, Nigerian, Pakistani, Polish, and Somali.

All of them are primary caregivers for their children/other adults and cannot work outside of the family home. Some of them have never been in formal education, have found it difficult to integrate into society, and mistrust mainstream provision. All are benefit claimants, 30% have indicated that they have mental health problems, and 20% have a disability.



*I've found what my skill set is, and I've found my calling. This is where I feel like I belong. It's a very creative and artistic process where you must use your imagination to come up with new things. - N*



*I'm looking forward to the entire cycle. It's incredible. It's now made me really excited to continue. Even if I don't get into part two, to progress and get into new patterns and get into it - so I can one day say: look at this, I made it! - L*



# 04 Outcomes achieved

Kundakala records "distance travelled" measurements for the women we support. We ask women questions at the time of registration and track their progress at specific points during their journey with us. Through this we know that participants have had the following positive outcomes:



## Heightened confidence

80%

report improved confidence through acquiring new skills



## Connectedness

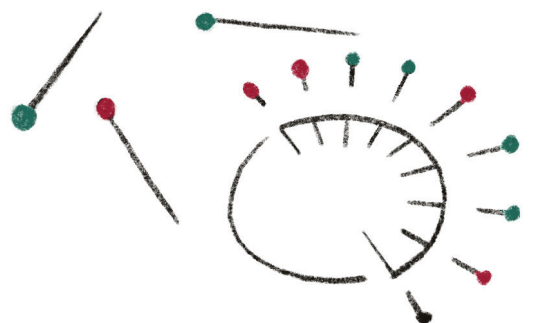
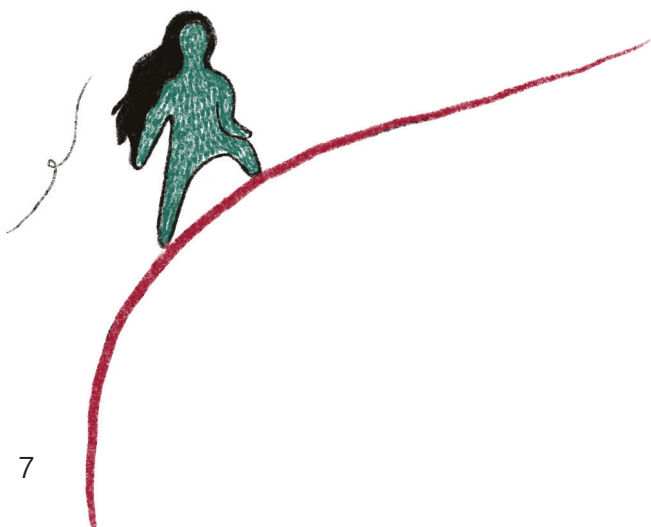
92%

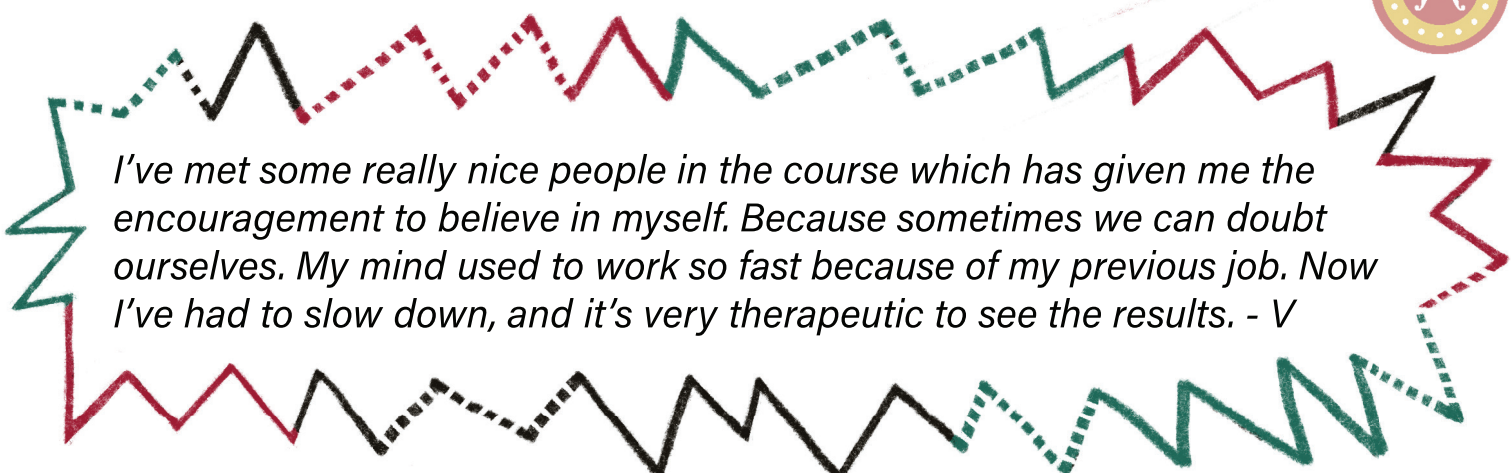
have formed lasting friendships through our programmes

## Better mental health

72%

report improvement with poor mental health





*I've met some really nice people in the course which has given me the encouragement to believe in myself. Because sometimes we can doubt ourselves. My mind used to work so fast because of my previous job. Now I've had to slow down, and it's very therapeutic to see the results. - V*

### **Sense of belonging**

100%

feel more integrated into society after our programmes

### **Increase in income**

83%

achieve savings through clothing alterations



40%

gain income through commissions and product sales, successfully addressing their financial struggles.

# 05 Why our programmes are so effective



## \* We deliver “culturally sensitive” interventions

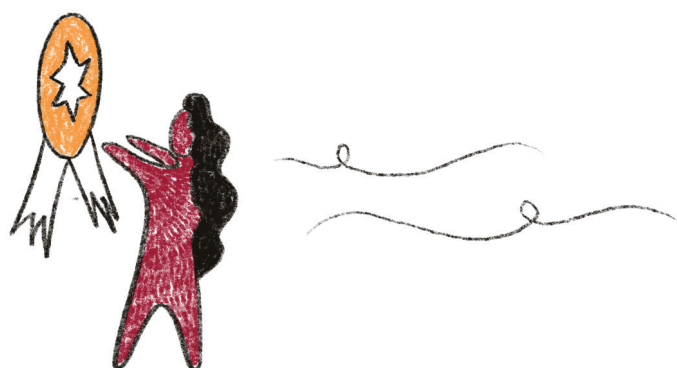
We partner with local community centres, housing associations, social prescribers, and are guided by their input on what is culturally appropriate. Our own Kundakala Community Champions also play a significant role. This approach ensures cultural inclusivity, allowing women to preserve their traditions while integrating into wider society.

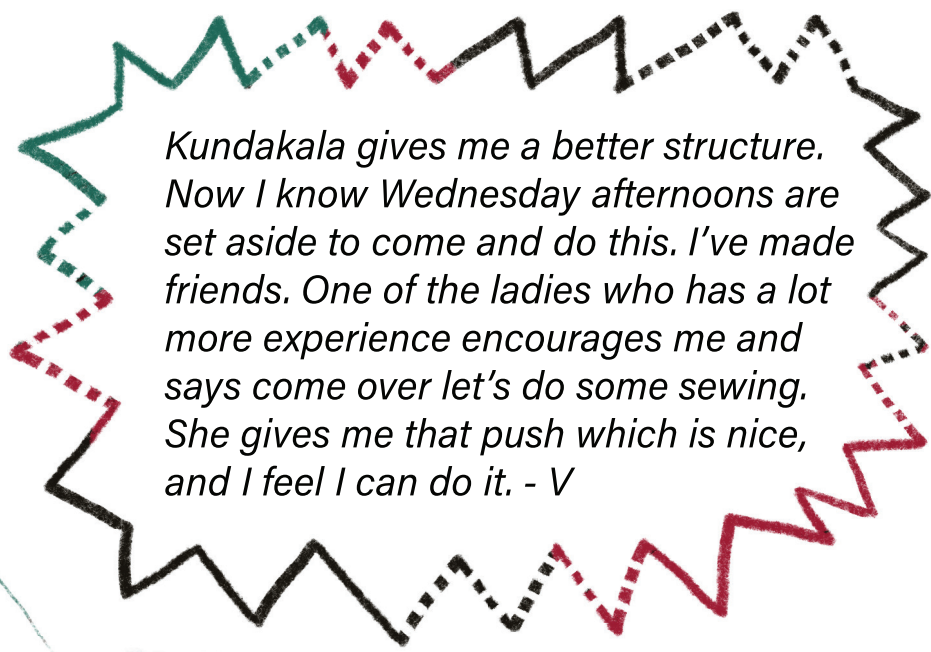
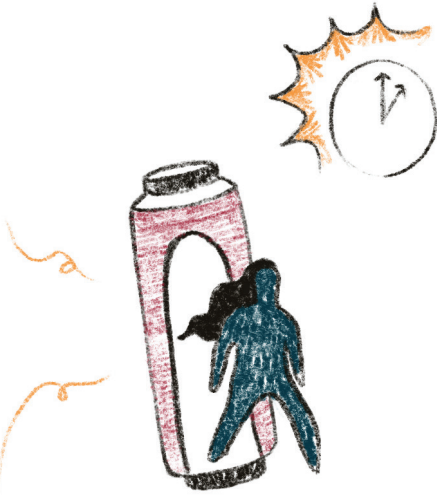
## \* We are trusted by the communities we serve

We work within communities engaging local women as outreach workers, our work is entirely designed and led by women from ethnic minority communities, most of whom are economic migrants to the UK.

## \* We have the expertise and experience

Our small team of staff and associates have the credentials and years of experience in enabling women to build confidence and develop skills that will enable them to generate an income in a field of work that they are interested to pursue.

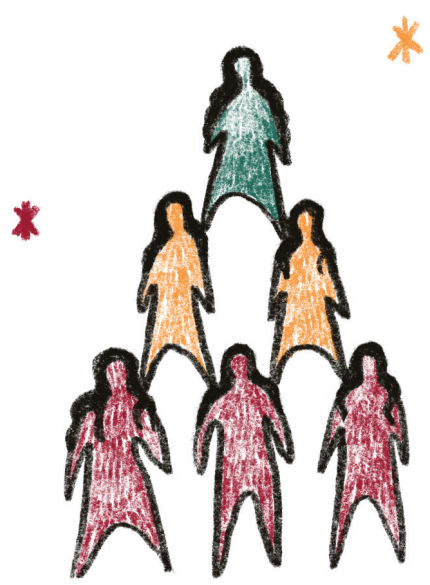




*Kundakala gives me a better structure. Now I know Wednesday afternoons are set aside to come and do this. I've made friends. One of the ladies who has a lot more experience encourages me and says come over let's do some sewing. She gives me that push which is nice, and I feel I can do it. - V*



*It's good to empower women. We should make it accessible to everybody. I've seen how its helped a lot of people with their mental health. I didn't realise how much it could really help somebody heal, or feel like they can connect with real people. - N*



## 06 Our vision and its ripple effect on our world

Through our programmes, ethnic minority women gain the ability to integrate and contribute to local communities via their newly gained confidence and social networks.

Additionally, they can work within their cultural frameworks without compromising on their financial independence. This leads to a more diverse UK labour market, tapping into a workforce that would otherwise be inactive.

The work that we do and the impact that we have achieved so far is taking Kundakala closer towards achieving our vision: **a world in which ethnic minority women make their own choices about how they learn, grow and contribute in an equal society.**



*On graduation day a few people bought some of my products and I was like wow, that's exciting. A little overwhelming but so exciting. It's given me that boost of confidence that I can make a product from scratch, starting from Kundakala really because without them I wouldn't have learnt how to make things or feel like I can put my stuff out there. - N*



*I'm hoping to gain complete autonomy from the programme.  
To be able to do whatever my mind wants, to be able to  
create that. - K*

