THE BINDI GUIDE

DF
★A
DESIGN *for* AMERICA

NYU

TABLE OF CONTENTS

This guide was written and designed by the New York University Design for America Bindi Project Team.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

WELCOME TO THE BINDI GUIDE

What is this guide for?
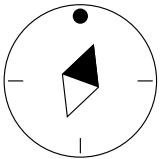
The Bindi Guide aims to help NGOs and grassroots groups co-create self-sustaining programs to empower low income women. It provides them with a step-by-step process on how to design and facilitate such programs using a human-centered design and train-the-trainee approach.

What are bindis?

Bindis are women who will become leaders and catalysts of change in their community through their participation in your program. Indeed, your training will provide bindis with self-confidence, knowledge, new skills and financial opportunities. Individually empowered, bindis will then help other women in their community in accessing knowledge and in learning new skills.

Why bindis?

We chose the name bindi as a metaphor for good luck and empowerment. In Indian culture, a bindi is a decorative mark worn in the middle of the forehead by women. It is said to protect against bad luck, and to retain energy. It signals that by becoming bindis, women will be empowered to change their communities. You might decide to use another name depending on the cultural context as long as the idea of support, energy, and strength remains.

Origins

This guide was created as part of Design for America of NYU's winning idea for OpenIDEO's Amplify Challenge. The approach was tested through several collaborations with NGOs working with women.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

The Bindi Guide is based on a three-fold strategic approach. This strategic approach consists of establishing (1) **a strong community**, (2) **financially empowered women**, and (3) **a self sustaining program**.
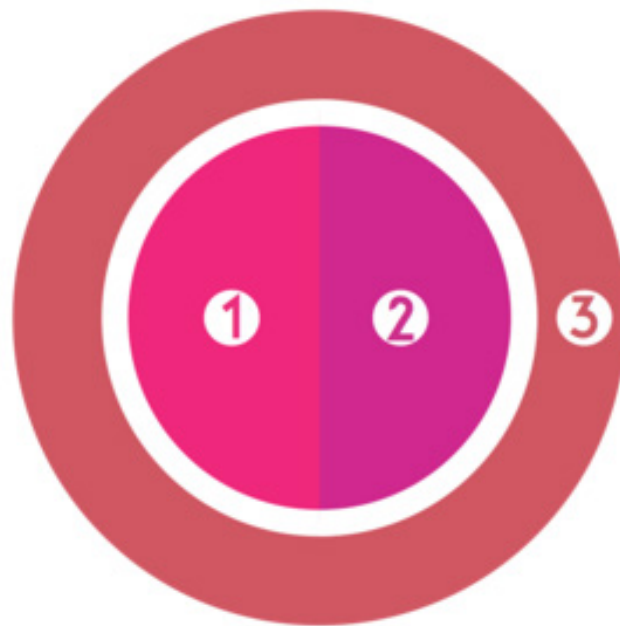
1. **A strong community:** Create a sense of community by connecting individuals and providing them with leadership training to make them confident.

2. **Financially empowered women:** Co-create financial opportunities and provide the relevant skill training.

3. **A self-sustaining program:** Engage the women to give back to the program as new members are included.
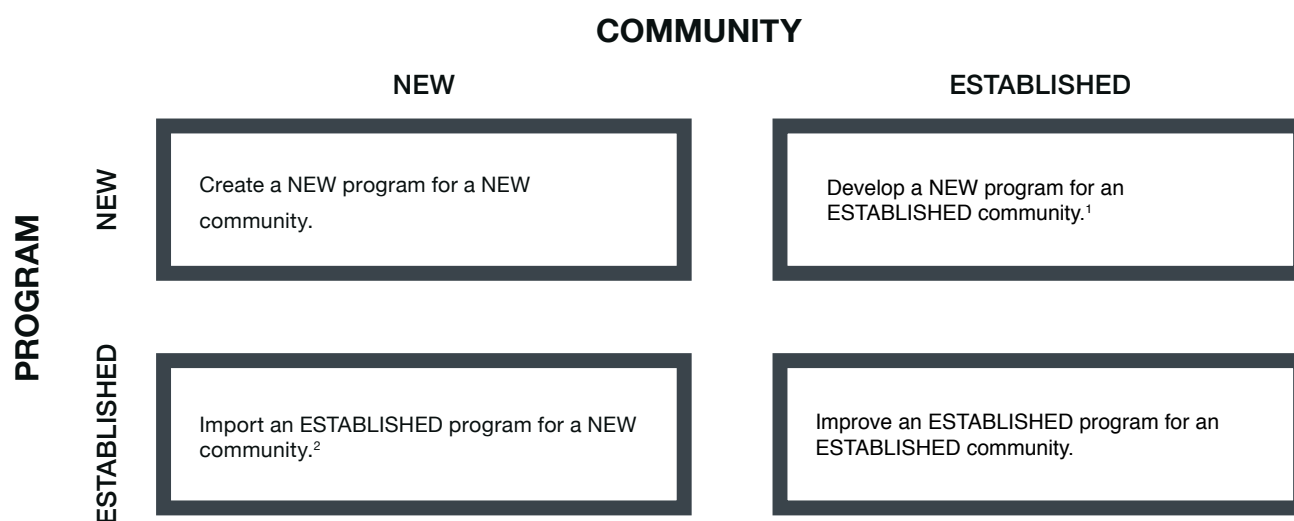
ORGANIZATIONAL DIAGNOSIS

Before you start using the Bindi Guide, please take some time to reflect on your organization's goals and capabilities, as well as on how you define what a community is. This is essential for you to develop a successful program. It will also help you decide when this guide might be the most useful for your organization.

GOALS:

- What is your organization's general mission?
- What is your goal when using this guide?

COMMUNITY

	NEW	ESTABLISHED
NEW	Create a NEW program for a NEW community.	Develop a NEW program for an ESTABLISHED community.[1]
ESTABLISHED	Import an ESTABLISHED program for a NEW community.[2]	Improve an ESTABLISHED program for an ESTABLISHED community.

(row label: **PROGRAM**)

1. E.g. you might have a strong program for sewing but now want to start a cooking program.
2. E.g. you might have been working with widows and now you are planning to work with married women, who tend to be younger; you might have a lot of expertise in rural areas and now are starting a program in an urban area

CAPABILITIES:

- Have you worked on similar community-based projects in the past?
- Have you been using a well-defined methodology in your previous projects?
- Have you used well-developed training modules?
- How much staff do you have? Are they volunteers and / or employees?
- Do you have partners? (e.g. other NGOs? Governmental agencies? Informal groups in the community?) What resources can they provide you with?

COMMUNITY DIAGNOSIS

What community means varies widely. For example, a community can be a group with a similar cultural background, or a similar socio-economical background. It can also refer to members of different groups who share aspirations and trust each other. Because of these multiple meanings, it is essential for you to define clearly what community means to your organization before you engage in developing a community-centered program. It is also important that you assess the group(s) you plan to work with and evaluate if they form a community.

What kind of community do you aim to nurture?

Are you trying to create a closely-knit supportive community for women for a certain cultural community or are you trying to break barriers and connect different groups within a diverse neighborhood? How much diversity are you aiming for?

For example, women with the same nationality or religion do not necessarily feel members of the same community. Similarly, living in the same neighborhood does not mean that one feels a part of a community with their neighbors.

Diversity can be a strength but it requires work to manage it. So, be ready to nurture diversity. It is key to understand the motivations and aspirations of participants upfront and to be clear with them about your program's vision. In some cases, your program might not be a good fit for them.

COMMUNITY DIAGNOSIS
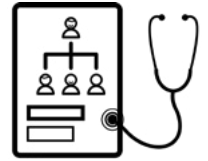
Some dimensions to help you define the group you want to work with.

These can help you define who to recruit as participants and how to assess their level of community after the program has started:

1. Geography:
Are the participants living in the same neighborhood and likely to see each other daily? Or do they live further away from each other (same city but different neighborhoods)?

2. Demographics:
  • Age group? Marital status? Children? Education?

  • Economic status? Employment?

  • Nationality? Religion?

3. Connections:
  • Do they know each other?

  • Do they live next to each other?

  • When and where do they meet?

  • Motivations and Aspirations: What brings the participants together?

  - Having friends

  - Feeling part of a group

  - Being part of a shared project

  - Personal development

HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN

This guide was developed using the Human-Centered Design (HCD) approach, which also inspired the process we invite you to embrace.

As stated by IDEO.org in *The Field Guide to Human-Centered Design*, embracing human-centered design means believing that all problems, even the most challeging ones like women empowerment, are solvable. Moreover, it means believing that the people who face those problems are the ones who hold the key to their answer. Thus, human-centered design offers you an approach to co-create with communities, creating innovative solutions based on people's actual needs.

The human-centered design involves three main phases: **Inspiration**, **Ideation**, and **Implementation**, which in some cases might overlap.

INSPIRATION
In this phase, you'll learn how to better understand people. You'll observe their lives, hear their hopes and desires, and get smart on your challenge.

IDEATION
Here you'll make sense of everything that you've heard, generate tons of ideas, identify opportunities for design, and test and refine your solutions.

IMPLEMENTATION
Now is your chance to bring your solution to life. You'll figure out how to get your idea to market and how to maximize its impact in the world.

Adapted from *The Field Guide to Human-Centered Design* by IDEO.org (www.designkit.org/resources/1)

SIX VALUES

As you design and grow a community-centered program, embrace these six values.

Co-Create: Remember to not design *for* but *with* the women. By collaborating with community members you will be able to develop a solution for their needs.

Community Members are the Experts of their Culture: The women know their community needs, resources, and challenges. Regularly remind them that it is their program and let them make decisions. Give permission and celebrate the wins.

Facilitate: This program is for the women and should eventually be run by them. Be sure to let the women come up with their own solutions. Your role is to facilitate and support the process rather than create and implement.

Iterate and Test: Prototype your ideas, test them, and refine the program based on the women's feedback. You won't get it right the first time, so keep iterating and experimenting to refine and improve the program. Build upon your learnings of what works and what does not work!

Make it Self-Sustaining: To develop a strong and sustainable program, it is important to be(-come) independent from external funding (e.g. grants, foundation). Engage your community members so that they feel ownership and participate by providing services and resources (through volunteering and possibly financial participation).

Community-Centered: Community is the end-goal but also the starting point. For each new idea, evaluate its value and relevance through the community lens: Does it make sense for the whole community? Will it help grow the community?

BINDI GUIDE MAP

This guide consists of four main steps: Define and Co-Create, Train and Bootstrap, Make it Self-Sustaining, Evaluate and Refine.

DEFINE AND CO-CREATE

TRAIN AND BOOTSTRAP

EVALUATE AND REFINE

MAKE IT SELF-SUSTAINING
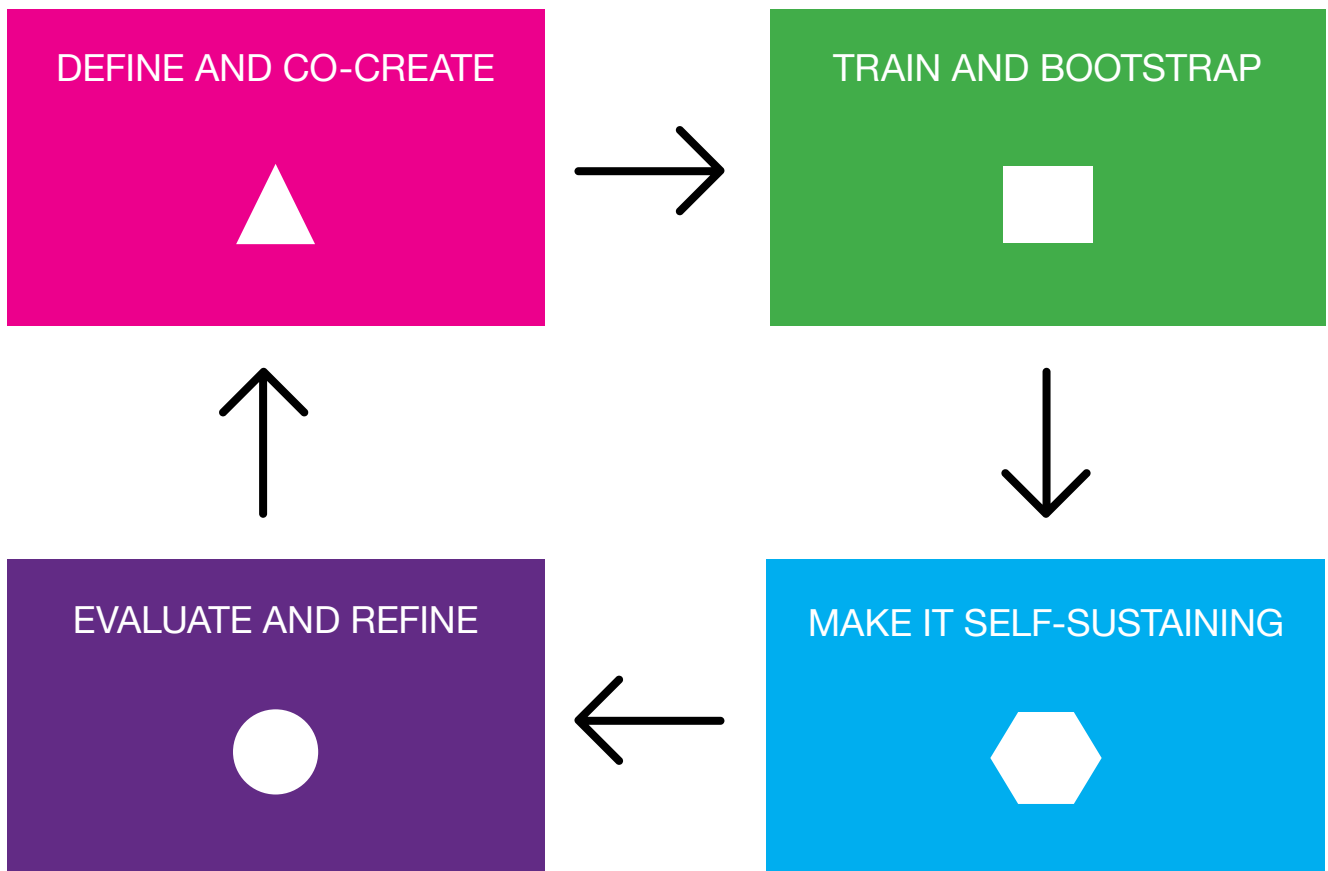
DEFINE AND CO-CREATE
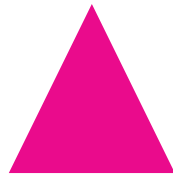
1. HOW TO SCOPE YOUR PROGRAM

Goal: *To identify the women who will participate in the program as well as their needs and expectations:*

- Organize meetings (one-on-one and in groups) within the community to discuss:

  - Do they feel like they are a part of a community?

  - What are the community's needs, motivations, and constraints?

  - What kind of program would they like to be a part of? What would be the best incentive for them to participate? Ask them how much time they are ready / can put in their bindi role.

  - Identify a space in the community where they can meet (as well as a workspace in some cases).

- **Output**: at the end of this phase, you should have an idea of what your program will focus on: General development and confidence? Health? Technical skills? Supporting the creation of income generation opportunities?

Tips:
- You will probably need more than one meeting.
- These meetings are a great source of information when it comes to designing the training modules.
- Make the events informal and friendly (e.g. provide lunch).
- Provide a setting that allows open discussion amongst themselves and encourage to lead the discussions.
- The assumption behind developing a Bindi program is that it is co-created with the women.

2. HOW TO RECRUIT BINDIS

Goal: *To encourage women in the community to be a part of the program to take advantage of the training and become actively engaged in their community.*

Creating awareness:
- Organize informal and social events to present the program and create interest in the program.

- You could use posters, flyers, and even social media depending on the contexts.

- If you already have some contacts, use them to recruit women who might be interested in participating.

- Word of mouth is powerful. It will be particularly useful after the first instantiation of the program.

Who to select:
- Start by identifying women who have the potential to become change agents.

  - Interview women in the community asking them who they go to for answers and who helps when they have problems.

  - Look for women who have been in the community for at least 2 years.

  - Focus on trust, knowledge, and connection while identifying potential bindis.

- After the first group of bindis is trained, senior bindis might make recommendations for future bindis. As word of mouth spreads, women are likely to volunteer to become bindis.

2. HOW TO RECRUIT BINDIS

- Depending on how developed your program is, explain how much involvement this program will require from them.

- You might want to meet individually with the potential bindis to understand **their** motivations, needs, and constraints.

Tips:
- Be clear about how much commitment the program requires: It's better to start small with committed participants than having a big group of uncommitted participants who will end up dropping out.
- Make sure that you don't only go for the "popular" women, but for the trusted women.
- Make sure that the selected women have the potential to develop empathy for other women, such as less connected or even new comers.
- Working with (other) local organizations and groups might be useful at this stage.
- Carry out informal meetings to explain the program: how it would work, the training provided and its benefits for women participating. Make sure to explain the involvement it requires during the training and after it.

3. HOW TO DEFINE TRAINING

Goal: *To define the specific needs of the Bindis and customize a specific training program.*

- Organize a meeting with potential participants to determine specific training needs for the women you selected to participate in your program. In particular, determine if the women will use the skills learnt during the program to develop a small business.

- This phase will allow you to customize your training modules for this specific group (see card "What training to offer" for topics' options).

- Identify resources and partners required to deliver specific training.

Tips:
- You can use the needs that emerged during the first meetings you organized in the community to define women's needs and challenges.
- Invite different stakeholders (other NGOs, micro-loans organization, health organization, governmental agencies, etc.) to the meetings so that they (1) understand the specific needs of the community, (2) develop specific information resources or suggest some training, and (3) develop relationships with the Bindis.
- Start by creating a structure of possible courses. It will help you figure out what you already have and build upon your strengths rather than re-inventing the wheel.
- After the first iteration of the program, some Bindis might be involved in these discussions and may be able to provide inputs on what they found useful (or not useful) during their training.

4. HOW TO FACILITATE ENGAGEMENT

Goal: *To help you develop a trustful relationship with the program participants. It will allow them to become active actors and partners in the program rather than seeing themselves as "customers" to whom you provide a service.*

- Define roles clearly (and often): you are the facilitator; community members are actively engaged in this program which is *their* program. Ultimately, they will own and run it.

- Engage participants right from the start.

- Involve them in the decision making process so that they feel ownership.

- Ask regularly for feedback and be ready to hear negative feedback.

- Act upon their feedback to show you listen to them and if you decide not to act, explain why.

- Have a transparent and ongoing communication system. Remember that for people to trust you, they need to feel reciprocity (i.e. if you ask for information, give some information back).

Tips:
- Do not state your position first as participants might feel they have to agree with you. If they ask you a question, instead of replying first, ask them what they think.
- Organize interactive activities involving visuals: card sorting, experience journey, and games are great way to engage participants.
- Start with ice-breakers to create an open atmosphere.
- Make sure that if you have already made a decision, you inform the participants rather than asking them for their opinion and then announcing that something different is going to happen.

TRAIN AND BOOTSTRAP

5. WHAT TRAINING TO OFFER (?)

Goal: *To help you structure the training you plan to offer.*

The content of the training will vary depending on the community you are working on, your capabilities and partnerships. However, there are some important building blocks to keep in mind.

- The "Core": This self-development module includes leadership skills with a focus on empathy and communication. It aims to help each woman to become confident and able to speak and think for herself.

- Home economy skills (e.g. how to start a bank account; how to get a phone; what are your property rights?).

- Health & sanitation (e.g. sex and health education; early childhood development).

- Literacy skills might be added in some areas.

- Technical skills (e.g. sewing, craft making, hairstyling).

- Business skills (e.g. accounting, project management).

6. HOW TO TRAIN BINDIS

Goal: *To provide you with pedagogical principles to support the learning process of participants and to suggest ways of developing a pool of competent teachers for your program.*

- **Experiential learning** is a learning theory which claims that people learn better if they can put in practice what they learn. Experiential learning also helps building the participant's confidence. Some techniques to promote experiential learning:

  - Use a lot of visuals and real-life cases to help the participants connect with complex and abstract concepts.

  - Design hands-on activities and role play.

  - Provide bindis with opportunities for practicing in class and outside of the classroom.

- You can combine experiential learning with the train-the-trainer model. This will allow bindis to deepen their knowledge by practicing and explaining it to others. Teaching others will increase participants' self-confidence. The train-the-trainer model will also give them ownership of the program and provide your organization with a pool of competent instructors who can teach to other women.

- There are two important aspects in the train-the-trainer model:

  - Make sure that the women master the content and provide them with resources (handouts, visuals, etc.) to help them deliver the content.

  - Provide them with facilitating skills.

6. HOW TO TRAIN BINDIS

Tips: ⓘ

- The three main steps of the train-the-trainer model:

  - **Step 1:** Women will participate to a class or workshop - possibly more than once. They will then be invited to volunteer to learn how to become a trainer.

  - **Step 2:** Women will be given guidelines and tips on how to present effectively and how to engage others. They will do hands-on activities and receive feedback from the instructors and other participants in order to improve.

  - **Step 3:** Women participating in the train-the-trainer model will teach a first session to other women in their program to gain confidence. They will then have the opportunity to co-facilitate with their instructors to an outside group before starting teaching on their own.

- For the first session taught by bindis, instructors should be present and provide feedback and coaching afterwards.

MAKE IT SELF-SUSTAINING
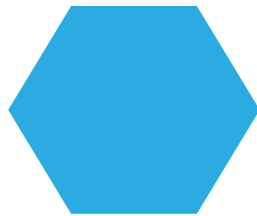
7. HOW TO ENGAGE BINDIS

Goal: *Make the community-centered program self-sustaining by engaging bindis in "giving back" time and / or money.*

- Towards the end of the program, organize a meeting with the bindis to assess what they learnt and how they think the program can be improved. Ask them *how* and *how much* they want to be involved (e.g. financial participation, volunteering a few hours a week, helping with some of the training, etc.) in the future. **Their willingness to be actively engaged is a measure of success.**

- Peer training is key in empowering women. Yet, it requires bindis to see it as part of their role and understand that they will deepen their knowledge and improve their communication skills by teaching others. Discuss with those interested to define what sessions they want to teach and what extra support they need. (See tips on train-the-trainer model in card "How to train bindis")

- If your program has an income generation component, participants might decide to give a small amount / percentage of their earnings to the program. It makes particularly sense if the program is organized as a cooperative model.

Tips:
- Start this conversation right from the beginning as this is a core component of the model. Keep coming back to it! It's also a great way to test how much of a sense of community is emerging.
- During the training phase, the train-the-trainer model provides a lot of opportunities for women to learn and practice facilitation.
- After the first year of the program, plan to implement a mentoring program to support bindis who want to learn how to facilitate. This is a great opportunity to learn more and build confidence. In some cases, it can become an income generation option.

8. HOW TO SUPPORT BINDIS

Goal: *Make sure that as the bindis take on their role in the community, they feel supported and can be helped if needed.*

- Encourage the bindis to meet weekly as a group to discuss their experience.

- Organize monthly meetings with the bindis to talk over their experience and determine what extra support they might need. You might realize that new information and resources are needed by women in the community.

- Support the bindis who are starting a business in order to make it successful. Offer the possibility to retake (or take) some classes if needed.

Tips:
- Continuing follow-up is key. You might realize that bi-monthly meetings are necessary.
- Bindis need to know that there is a space for dialogue where they can share issues they are facing. Transparency and dialogue should be guiding principles.
- Make sure to maintain the involvement of various stakeholders and bring in other stakeholders if / when needed.
- Get feedback from the community in order to help bindis support them better. Possibly go and talk informally with other women to gather information of the perception of the bindis by others. If women in the community do not feel comfortable approaching the bindis, find out why and address the issue.

EVALUATE AND REFINE
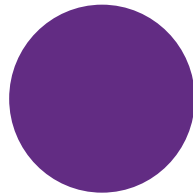
9. HOW TO RECOGNIZE BINDIS

Goal: *To acknowledge the knowledge, skills, and expertise gained by the bindis and their work in their community.*

- Plan a graduation ceremony at the end of the program to recognize the skills acquired by the bindis and make them legitimate in their community.

- Give them a certificate and a symbol (badge, uniform, etc.).

Tips:
- In some communities, you might need to have a ceremony at the beginning of the program to do an official kick-off and then one at the end.
- Symbolic artifacts are important for the bindis' identity and pride but also for them to feel legitimate and be recognized in their community.
- After a few rounds of the program, creating a senior bindi role where senior bindis are recognized for their expertise and their involvement in the community and inviting them to be part of a senior bindi committee is a great way to keep them involved. It will provide also a useful governance structure.

10. HOW TO EVALUATE AND REFINE

Goal: *To keep learning and iterating the idea to increase its impact.*

- Meet with the bindis for a "learning after action" session to collect their feedback and brainstorm on possible changes for the next round. Invite them to be specific and to volunteer to help implementing these changes.

- Assess the community: Communities are always composed of core and peripheral members. Define who are your core and peripheral members: you will need to engage and support them differently.

- Decide what training modules you want to keep and what new ones you might want to add. Check if you have the capacity to teach or develop these modules, or if you need to partner with other organizations.

- Make a call for future bindis to see if there is interest in the community. See also if some women have reached out to express their interest in participating to the program.

- Make sure to do informal interviews with members in the community to understand their perception of the bindis.

10. HOW TO EVALUATE AND REFINE

Tips:

- It is crucial to engage the bindis as they are the program's champions in their community.
- Peer training and the creation of the senior bindi role are key in empowering bindis and making the program self-sustaining.
- Consider going back to the Organization and Community Diagnosis cards to reflect on your organization and the community.
- Be ready to experiment and to do small changes to test an assumption. Be also ready to let go of something that does not seem to work. This is a learning process!
- Know that core members usually represent 10 - 20% maximum of a community. So don't worry if not everyone has the same level of engagement. Yet, make sure to support everyone.
- You will never completely phase out but your role will over time become more a mentoring and facilitating role than an implementer.

11. HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

Goal: *To help you evaluate the impact of your program in order to measure success and improve the program.*

- As in any change program, it is key to monitor the impact of your actions; in this case, the impact of the bindis on their community as well as the impact being a bindi had on women's lives.

- It is important for your team to define these measures upfront so that you are sensitive to them and collect data from the start. Here are some dimensions you might want to think about:

  - Number of bindis trained during the first year.

  - Number of women asking to be trained as bindis after the first phase of the program.

  - Awareness about the program and perception of the bindis by members of the community (collected through informal interviews or general meetings).

  - Number of activities and workshops organized by the bindis in their community and number of participants to these events.

  - Number of bindis volunteering in the program after their training.

  - Number of bindis who have found a job or developed their own business.

# 11. HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

Tips:

- Evaluation should be ongoing: Make sure to use some of the activities (e.g. feedback during monthly meetings) that took place during the program to continuously assess it.
- If the bindis organize events with members from their community, find out how participants heard about the event.
- If the bindis have a shared space, you can consider having an idea box for visitors to make suggestions.
- The aim of the interviews with members of the community is to check that people know about the bindis' role and to understand, if they interacted with them, in which context they did and how they perceived them. This will provide you with a measure of the engagement of bindis in the community.
- Consider doing individual interviews with each bindi at the end of the program to discuss with them their progress and their future goals.

THE BINDI JOURNEY

THE BINDI JOURNEY

The Bindi Journey starts with individuals (Phase 1), who through their participation to your program will grow individually and start forming a community (Phase 2). They will then develop it in a self-sustaining empowered community (Phase 3).
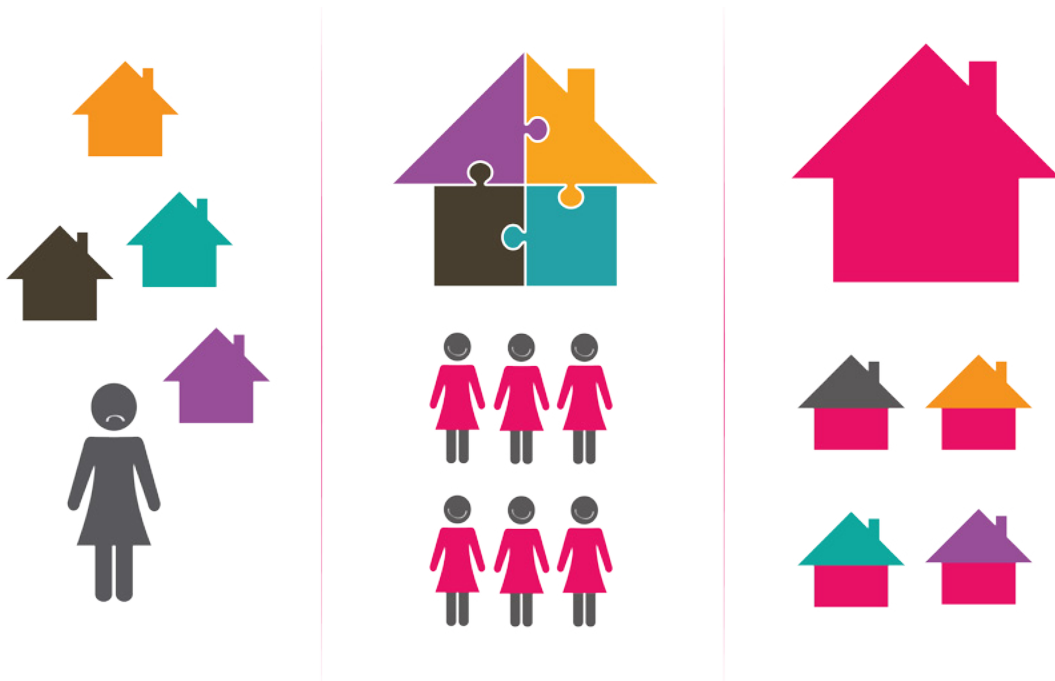
The Bindi Guide suggests a step-by-step process that will support you and the bindis participating in your program to successfully create a self-sustaining community-centered program. Remember that change takes time and requires consistent efforts. The process suggested by the Bindi guide is an iterative and continuous one. Good luck in your Bindi endeavor!