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## EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN AND INCREASING RESILIENCE IN THE JORDAN VALLEY

In line with UNESCO's continuous efforts to elevate the quality of life and employment opportunities for women in Jordan, an innovative approach has been promoted. Supported by Drosos Foundation, this project targets women in the village of Ghor el Safi. UNESCO has been extending its arm for local women's cooperative since 2013, focusing on improving lives by using culture as a source of resilience.

Safi Crafts produces handmade textile items using natural dyes representing the local tradition, history and heritage of Jordan, bringing it all together with a modern twist that appeals to today's consumers. The process in a nutshell indulges in Jordan's most original ingredients, refining them into functional elements, to ensure that each piece produced brings forth an exclusive fusion of the different resources across the kingdom.

UNESCO supports the local association through building the capacities of the women in marketing management and business development as well as design and natural dyeing techniques. One of the highlights of the project has been the re-introduction of "Indigofera Tinctoria" in Jordan, a natural blue dye that was cultivated in Jordan.





"Before Safi Crafts, I had never worked on a team before; now I work with 14 women. It has given me a sense of belonging"

- Arwa







## GHOR EL SAFI

Located 350 meters below sea level, Ghor el Safi is located in the south of the Dead Sea and is considered one of Jordan's poverty pockets. The sub-district has the highest proportion of households with irregular income and the largest percentage of job seekers.

Situated near the lowest point on earth, Ghor el Safi enjoys a unique geographical position and a remarkable history that often goes unnoticed. The village was known during Roman-Byzantine periods by the name “Zoara” and was famous for being a vital agricultural and trade center up until the Islamic period. Its unique climate conditions favored the production of sugarcane and indigo, as evidenced by archaeological and historical sources.







## GHOR EL SAFI WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Established in 1996, the association was founded with the aim of supporting the local community, particularly the women. Since its inception, the association has undertaken activities in various fields to support the local community, including vocational programs for women, basic education for youth, as well as both material and financial aid for families in need.

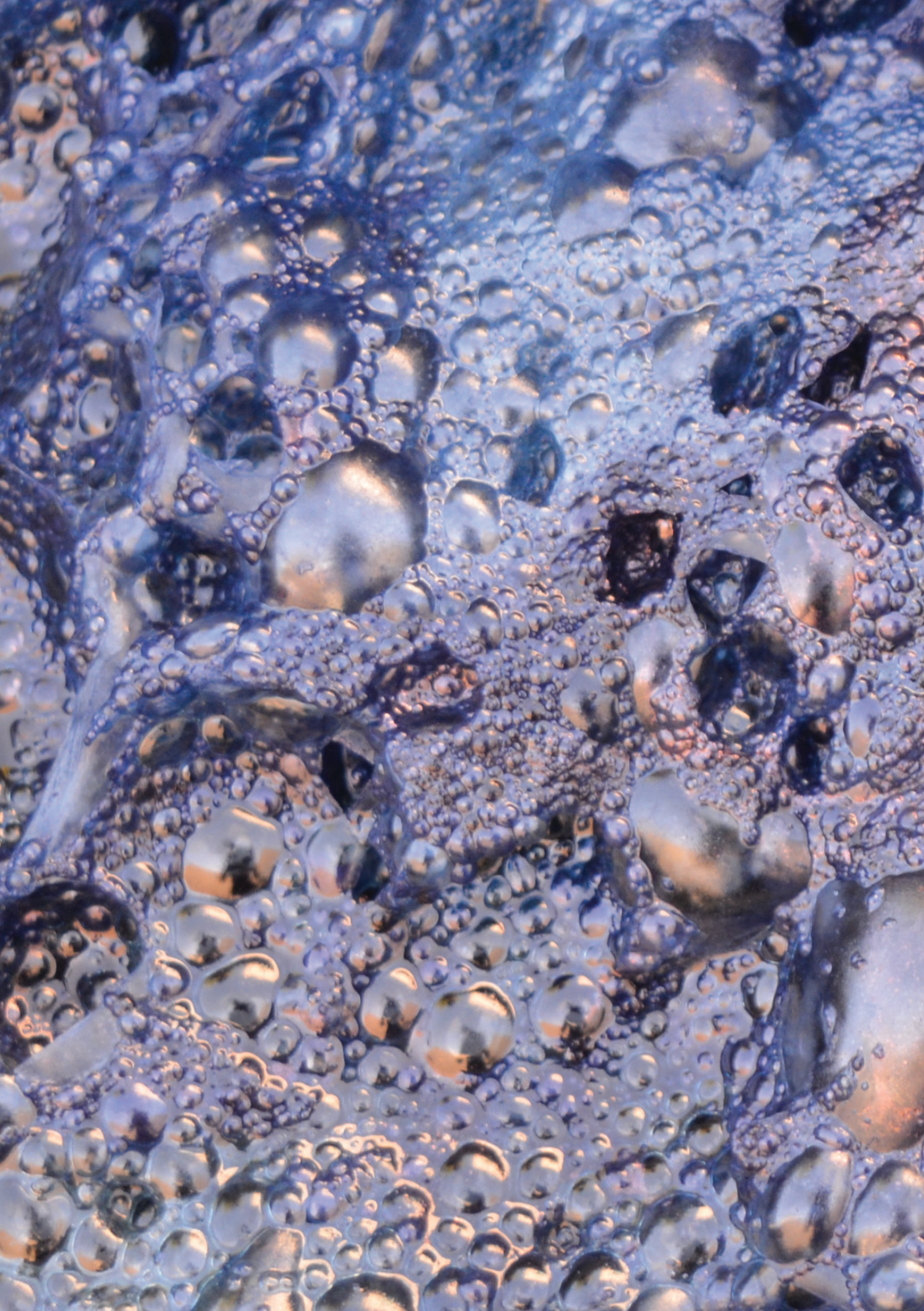
In 1999, the association created the textile brand Safi Crafts, when a group of 15 women from the village began an embroidery and soil-dyeing project under the guidance of the Canadian-American artist Jean Bradbury. The eco-friendly products are all hand painted, dyed and embroidered by the women of Ghor el Safi in the Jordan Valley. Using native plants to create the dyes straight from earth, Safi Crafts produces unique contemporary designs. Each piece tells its own story, reflected by the personal hardships and ambitions of each of the women in Ghor el Safi.

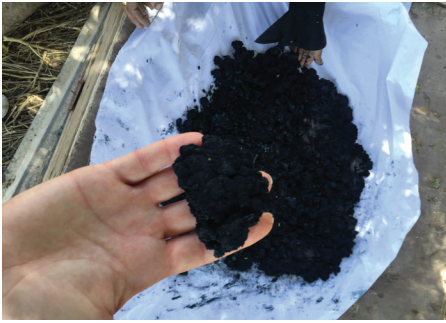
"In the beginning, we had a limited color scheme; adding indigo has helped us to develop five new shades"

- Umm Mohammad









## INDIGOFERA TINCTORIA

The special blue color utilized heavily in Safi Crafts creations, comes from the indigo plant “*Indigofera tinctoria*”. Historical and archaeological sources reveal that the indigo blue dye was produced and used in Jordan in ancient times. Indigo bearing-crops were certainly cultivated and harvested in the Jordan Valley and Ghor el Safi in the past, but their cultivation has now been lost

To give birth to this tradition again, the plant is cultivated right in the local farms, thanks to the support of UNESCO, Drosos Foundation and the Ministry of Agriculture. Using no chemicals or pesticides, the women harvest and process the plant by hand, following a traditional technique.








## NATURAL DYES

The women of Safi Crafts work with several other natural colors besides the signature blue. To create orange, salmon and rust brown, they use the natural earth colors of Petra and Wadi Mujib. Reds, oranges and pinks are derived from madder root, which is collected in the wilds of Dana village. Yellow is extracted from ochre earth and pomegranate rind, while black and grey are created using a centuries old method of mixing iron with tannins, such as those found in tea, eucalyptus bark and pomegranate rind, all locally produced. The rich brown dyes come from ochre earth, pomegranate rind and eucalyptus bark. Finally, the natural greens are crafted by over-dying indigo blues with yellows from pomegranate and ochre earth.





“Indigo is the only plant that can  
create a true blue color, organi-  
cally. And we are the only people  
who work with indigo in Jordan  
which makes it also truly unique”

- Mervat



## SAFI CRAFTS PRODUCTS

Safi Crafts produces a variety of products that appeal to an array of consumer tastes. The products range from scarves, to bags, wallets, hijabs, t-shirts, kaftans and the line also extends to home decor pieces and children's clothing, all while using only natural dyes. Each piece is designed to be extremely comfortable, durable and unique. Catering to different tastes and designs is essential for the success of this project, which is why UNESCO has ensured that the pieces produced are in line with current fashion and lifestyle trends.







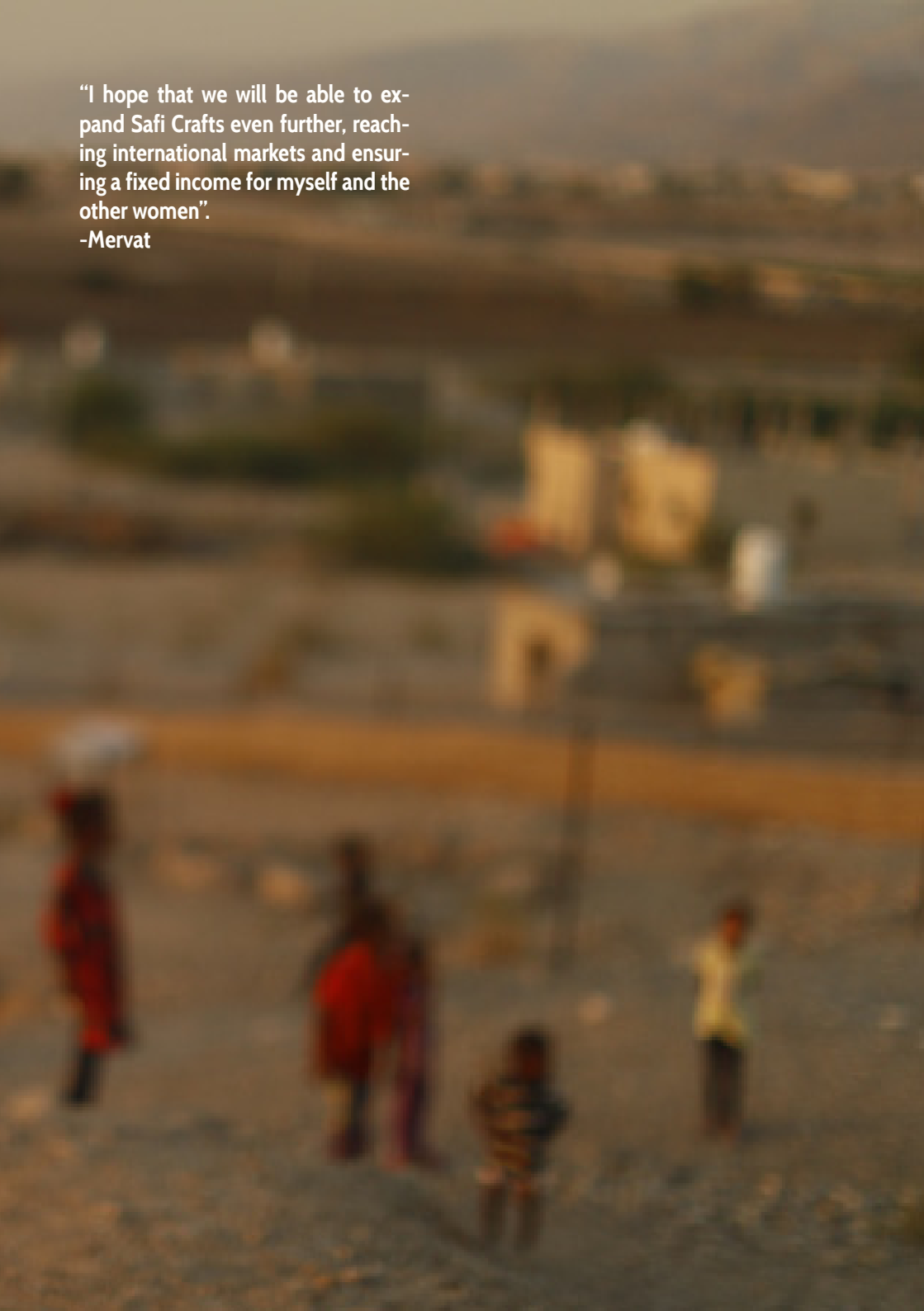
“Women who become decision-makers in order to increase their work opportunities have a positive impact not only on themselves but on their communities”.

- Nayfeh



“I hope that we will be able to expand Safi Crafts even further, reaching international markets and ensuring a fixed income for myself and the other women”.

-Mervat







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**With generous support from:**

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