

How One Mother Sewed a New Future for Her Family.

Prayagraj, the 36th most populous city in India, is a place where narrow lanes weave through deeply rooted conservative traditions and limited opportunities for women. In one such neighborhood, Nazreen lived a life defined by routine and restrictions. As a mother in a low-income Muslim household, her role was clear: raise children, manage the home, and stay silent. Stepping out to earn was not just discouraged, it was unthinkable.

But in 2011, that belief began to shift when her daughter, Umra, was enrolled as a sponsored child through **CFCA/Unbound**. The program provided crucial financial support for Umra's school fees and supplies, but it did more than that; it introduced Nazreen to the **mothers' group**, a platform where women like her met regularly to share, learn, and grow.

The group encouraged her to enroll in the tailoring course at the CFCA/Unbound community center, where she learned to sew professionally. She began small by offering sari hemming and mending services, using the shared sewing machine at the center.

But growth wasn't easy. When she managed to save enough for a second-hand sewing machine, it broke down within weeks. Frustrated but determined, she considered giving up.

"That's when the other mothers stepped in," she says. "They said, *'We'll support you, take a small loan from our group fund and try again.'* That gave me the strength to start fresh."

With the loan, Nazreen bought a new machine and began taking larger orders like blouses, salwar suits, and even school uniforms. Her modest earnings brought financial relief and new respect within the family.

Inspired by her mother's persistence, Umra also joined CFCA's **youth forums and summer workshops**, where she discovered a talent for Heena (Mehndi) art. What began as a creative outlet turned into a part-time income stream. She now takes commissions during festivals and weddings, helping fund her education.

Today, Nazreen's sewing machine hums daily, a sound that has become the heartbeat of a changed household. She is an active member of her mother's group, mentoring newer women who are just starting their journeys. Her children study in peace. Her voice, once quiet, now speaks with clarity and pride.