

6. DIWON HANDLOOM COTTON KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIAL CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY





The Diwon Handloom Cotton Khadi and Village Industrial Co-operative Society is situated at Diwon Village, near Umden in Ri Bhoi District. Apart from weavers, the co-operative includes women folk artisans. The co-operative focuses on promoting the economic, social and cultural interests of its members in the handloom sector. The co-operative engages in weaving, spinning and natural dyeing.

Their earliest activity involved procurement and supply of yarn for weavers, who may or may not be members of the co-operative. Gradually, the cooperative began to procure cocoons to produce their own yarn. They dedicate themselves to handloom weaving of traditional clothes like the Ryndia, a shawl woven from raw silk for both men and women.

The co-operative is a knowledge repository of the art of producing natural dyes. Traditionally limited to three colours, the co-operative discovered ways to produce another twelve colours.

Using no more than raw material available locally, the dyes are produced solely from organic sources. Their organic dyes and processing methods have been recognised by the Crafts Council of India. It has now become an area of study and research for design students, and a point of interest for foreign visitors.

Under the District Handloom Office, the co-operative Secretary, Kong Thran Tmung imparts training on the art of weaving and design to other interested individuals and groups. Their products are sold in local markets and emporiums and also outside the state at exhibitions organized by the Sericulture Department. They now have a permanent work shed with looms and a machine to facilitate designing. The infrastructure and facilities provided under the ICDP Scheme, enables the co-operative to increase production to meet the demand, producing designs and products that respond to the requirements of the market, while retaining their originality and unique traditions.

The women of the society who have been in the silk production and weaving business for many years have decided to venture into Village Tourism as an additional livelihood activity to increase incomes and provide employment to the youth of the village. With the help of Financial Assistance from the Government they have set up the 'Umden Traveller's Nest' comprising of two cottages with basic amenities and some common areas built amid a lush green space for dining and relaxing.

Besides this, other activities that this society provides for tourists who visit this area include lessons in silk weaving from traditional artisans, heritage walk through the forests and stone monoliths, cooking classes in traditional Khasi and Bhoi cuisine, music by local musicians in the evening around the camp fire, mountain biking through village trails and angling at the fish pond.



(Courtesy: www.megcooperation.gov.in)