LAIDLAW SCHOLARS · LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

SUMMER 2027

CraftHER

CraftHER LiA 2027

with Archana Women's Centre (AWC) & Swara in Kerala, South India

Spend six weeks of summer 2027 with AWC and Swara, as one of 3 to 4 Laidlaw Scholars. You'll create your own project to help marginalised women in the villages and small towns we work with earn an income.



With the women of Swara, summer 2024

Apply by Friday 11 December 2026

Hi, I'm Asha



Asha, founder of Swara

I'm a 2022 Laidlaw Scholar from the University of Oxford and the founder of Swara. Swara has run the CraftHER LiA for three summers, from 2024 to 2026.

In 2027 we're trying a new format, as part of the LiA Sustainability Lead programme. I'll help you prepare your LiA project before you arrive. On site, staff from Swara and our NGO partner, Archana Women's Centre (AWC), will be there to support you.

New for 2027: one place, two partners

Unlike CraftHER 2024, 2025 and 2026, you'll stay in one place, Kottayam, for all six weeks. You won't travel around Kerala, and you won't work with the other organisations in past CraftHER blogs. Please go by this booklet, not the old blogs, for what CraftHER 2027 looks like.

At a glance

Six full-time weeks with AWC and Swara in summer 2027, for 3 to 4 Laidlaw Scholars.

PARTNERS

Swara, and Archana Women's Centre (AWC), an NGO that works with 5,000+ marginalised women

WHERE

The AWC & Swara offices in Ettumanoor, Kottayam, Kerala, India

DATES

Thursday 1 July to Wednesday 11 August 2027, full-time

PLACES

3 to 4 Laidlaw Scholars

YOUR LIA

A project you propose for AWC and Swara. Both will help you deliver it

YOUR LEAD

Asha Scaria Vettoor, Oxford, founder of Swara. Online support for 5 months before and all through your LiA

Why this work matters

In the villages and small towns of Kerala, many women have real skills, from tailoring to carpentry and masonry. What's often missing is steady work and a way to reach buyers.

AWC trains women in trades and helps them start small businesses, and now works with more than 5,000 women. Swara is a slow fashion social enterprise that sources from women artisans and sells what they make.

Both are small teams with long to-do lists. They rarely have spare hands for the things that help women earn more, like an online shop, a marketing plan or a new product. CraftHER scholars have already built a financial model, a fundraising plan, a ten-piece clothing collection and social media strategies for our partners. In 2027 you get six weeks to take one idea all the way.



A scholar working with tailors



Scholars at a Coir unit

Ideas for your LiA project

Your LiA is a project you propose and deliver for AWC and Swara. Bring your own idea, or start from one of these.

1 Start your own brand

Create a small brand that sells products made by women. CraftHER LiA 2024 Scholar Lucia started The Flip!

2 Run a marketing campaign

Plan and launch a campaign for AWC or Swara, online, offline or both.

3 Launch AWC's online shop

Help AWC set up their online shop.... from product photos and stories to a launch plan.

4 Design a new product

Work with Swara's tailors on a new product or a small collection for the brand.

You'll shape and agree your proposal with AWC, Swara and me before you travel.

A typical week

MON TO FRI

Start your day with a 30-minute yoga class. Then head to the AWC or Swara office, depending on your project and where you need to be. We suggest working 10 am to 4 pm.

SAT & SUN

Days off. Plan day trips to the Vagamon tea hills, Marari beach or the Kumarakom backwaters.

SUPPORT

AWC and Swara each have full-time coordinators who can help you with your project.

Who will thrive at CraftHER

You don't need a background in business or fashion. You'll enjoy CraftHER if you:

- listen first, and learn from women who know their work far better than you do
- are happy working across a language gap, with a translator and some patience
- can roll with change, heat, monsoon rain and small-town life
- like working closely in a small team of 3 to 4 Laidlaw Scholars

Skills in design, marketing, photography, business or research will help with your project.



Abi working at a women's home-based food unit

Practical details

£2,000
accommodation, travel and SIM card for six weeks

£600
food for six weeks

£300
other spending

All amounts are approximate. Your room is a double occupancy AC room, and travel covers airport transfers and getting to work on weekdays. Flights and insurance are separate. **I'll help you book your accommodation and travel.**

Support from your Lead

Before you go: I'll help with logistics and with AWC and Swara, and check in as you develop your LiA proposal so it works for the organisations, your university and you. I'll share contacts and make sure you're as prepared as possible to have a good impact.

On site: I won't be in Kottayam, but I'll hold 1:1s every Wednesday and be on call for emergencies. AWC and Swara will give you a contact for day-to-day support.

8 online workshops, 1 hour each, before you arrive

1. Kickoff and introduction to Kerala
2. Shaping your LiA project – Part 1
3. Visa, travel and basic Malayalam
4. Shaping your LiA project – Part 2
5. Meet AWC and Swara
6. Take the Mic: speaking with confidence
7. Cultural awareness and addressing biases
8. Final Q&A: anything you want to ask

FAQs

Is this the same as CraftHER 2024 to 2026?
No. In 2027 you stay in Kottayam for all six weeks and work with two partners, AWC and Swara.

Can I come for part of the six weeks?
No. The LiA runs for the full six weeks, Thursday 1 July to Wednesday 11 August 2027.

Will you book my flights?
No, flights and insurance are yours to book. I'll help with accommodation, local travel and other logistics.

What's the weather like?
July and August are monsoon months in Kerala. Expect heavy rain on some days, so pack an umbrella and quick-dry clothes.

Where will I stay?
In a double occupancy AC room in Kottayam. I'll help you book it.

Apply by Friday 11 December 2026

1. Fill in the Google Form here: https://forms.gle/aTbKpc7MsWREfQz66
2. Ask me anything by email at asha@swaravow.com
3. Keep your Laidlaw Programme Manager in the loop