



Commitment to Kashmir (CtoK) has just completed a 7 month exercise to identify and select 25 lead craft entrepreneurs for its **Inclusive Livelihoods Program Based on Skill Development & Craft Entrepreneurship in the Valley**. The program aims over the next 18 months to use the strengths of each craft community rather than its weaknesses as the key driver to aid the creation and development of these 25 small businesses, owned and operated by artisans engaged in the production of traditional Kashmiri crafts. This will be achieved through an innovative and holistic hands on approach comprising of design and product training, skill enhancement, mentoring in business practices, logistics and providing marketing avenues to the 25 selected artisans.



Empowering Young Craft Entrepreneurs, Inspiring Growth Workshop

CtoK organised a four day Entrepreneurship Workshop with the 25 selected lead entrepreneurs at Dastkar, New Delhi, comprising of interactions with the CtoK Board of Trustees, Design Mentors as well as a one day entrepreneurship seminar.



The entrepreneurship seminar was aimed at orienting the artisan enterprises towards best practices in businesses, importance of quality, production planning, variable pricing structures, formation of cooperatives and principles of retail marketing. The artisans came to appreciate and realize the need for a holistic and integrated approach to develop all aspects of the craft business post the seminar and hence demand facilitation towards building of requisite capacity and capability, through introducing a market led approach.



Market Visit

CtoK conducted a market visit to Kamala - The Craft Shop of Crafts Council of India at Baba Kharak Singh Marg under the facilitation of Design Mentor Midhun KM, Industrial Product Designer, IIT Mumbai.

The guided store visit was aimed to help the craft entrepreneurs understand market trends, contemporary design preferences of the buyers, need for quality and the importance of different mediums used to enhance the beauty of the product such as lights, visual display etc. The artisans were observing the various craft products displayed at the store very inquisitively and at the end of the tour, all of the artisans were feeling charged and inspired to apply some of the learnings into their own craft skills.



Javaid Ahmad Wani, Leather Artisan Entrepreneur

When Javaid Ahmad Wani, one of the 25 lead entrepreneurs started the program with CtoK his skill level was average. Javaid would fabricate the embroidered bags, belts, jackets and shoes himself from Rexene and canvas and sell locally at the Dal Lake to tourists. Sadly, the worsening situation and reduced tourists have made it increasingly hard for him to sell, forcing him to sell mobile phones along with his crafted goods.

CtoK helped Javaid to work on his skill and pattern-making through an up-skilling workshop that was conducted at NIFT Delhi by Prof. Shinju Mahajan from 11th – 15th September 2017. Over the intense 5 days training, Javaid learnt to make a sling bag with pockets and lining, belt, T-Gusset bag in leather and the technique of quilting.



Shinju Mahajan, Head of Leather Accessories Department, NIFT, Delhi who designed and facilitated the workshop says " *There was a drastic improvement in his finishing and fabrication technique. When Javaid came to us I rated him 3/10 and now I can confidently say that his skill has improved and rate him as 7/10. Javaid was quick to follow and is enthusiastic to adopt at his workplace the new techniques learnt at NIFT.* "



Upcoming events:

1st Design Workshop in Srinagar with 7 designers and 25 artisan entrepreneurs
Upskilling Workshop on Basic Construction at NIFT, Delhi for 2 tailoring units from Srinagar

COMMITMENT TO KASHMIR, (CtoK) is a Delhi based Charitable Trust, launched in 2011. Inspired by the late LC Jain, activist, economist, Gandhian, and lover of crafts and craftspeople, the CtoK initiative was conceived to support a new generation of crafts persons from Kashmir, who had been witnessing decades of unrest and paralyzed livelihoods with few opportunities and guidance, become independent and sustainable entrepreneurs.