



# AIACA Newsletter Issue 6 October 2017

I am happy to publish the sixth issue of AIACA Newsletter. This issue features two key events of AIACA from the last quarter, one focusing on policy and the other on an unique marketing opportunity. While AIACA was hosting a national conference on green economy and the crafts sector, it was preparing for featuring Craftmark on Lakme Fashion Week 2017 held in Mumbai. We had a great experience in both the events with definite way forward that AIACA is currently working on.

As GST got introduced creating a hue and cry in the handicrafts sector, AIACA has been closely engaging with the policy, its changes, developments and impact. As AIACA intensively works towards development and strenthening of organized registered artsian organizations, it has also undertaken capacity building of the rural artisan – entrepreneurs on GST rules and processes in Varanasi, Mubarakpur and Kota. It has not only helped the artisan organizations to register for GST, but is also providing continuous handholding support to carry on with business. AIACA being an association of handicrafts and handloom artisans and organizations, we feel that this is an opportunity to truly organize the sector and capacitate it for business enhancement.

In our guest column, Ms. Archana Shah, Founder of Bandhej, has contributed an article on “Handcrafted Textiles for a Sustainable Future”. We thank Archana for her article and invite our readers to contribute to this column too.

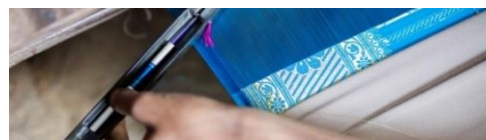
Enjoy reading!

**Madhura Dutta**  
Executive Director

## Enterprise Support Program



## Stories from the Field



## Policy Update



## Guest Column



## Highlights & Upcoming Events



## ENTERPRISE SUPPORT PROGRAM

### Craftmark Members at Lakme Fashion Week 2017

Craftmark, the national certification for authentic high quality handmade crafts of India produced in a socially responsible manner, showcased its artisanal products at the Lakme Fashion Week under the label of “Craftmark: Sustainable Creative Economy” between 16-20 August. The Fashion Show held on 17<sup>th</sup> August showcased the artisan-designer collaborative collection at 6 Degree Studio at 8:30 PM as part of their theme of “Sustainable Fashion Day”.

At this event, Ms. Roopa Mehta (Vice President of AIACA and CEO, Sasha Association for Craft Producers -"Sasha") presented the importance of Craftmark in the current market context and for sustenance and growth of handmade crafts of India.

Craftmark featured three collections of Craftmark members that each has a unique story about sustainable livelihood of women artisans – Purkal Stree Shakti showcasing applique and patchwork, The Nabha Foundation showcasing Phulkari, and Sandur Kushala Kala Kendra showcasing Lambani embroidery.

*AIACA launched and runs Craftmark since 2006. The Craftmark is recognized by national and international markets, and assures that Craftmark certified products are made in India, authentically handmade, of high quality, and that they were produced using fair labour, without use of child labour, and under decent working conditions for the artisans.*

*The Craftmark has been a symbol of quality and craft, linking the diverse hand skills and products of India to conscious consumers. It has given confidence to producers by differentiating genuine manufacturers. It has helped preserve traditional techniques and has enabled artisan businesses to grow.*



Kashi Bai from Sandur Kushala Kala Kendra (Craftmark member) walking the ramp with designer Anshu Arora.

### The Show

This show was a first of its kind, where the designers truly collaborated and co-created the collections with the artisans and artisan organizations, working with various authentic hand crafted processes and with the objective of promoting the artisan based enterprises at such a premium business platform.

At the Lakme Fashion Week, Craftmark also had a B2B space where artisans of the Craftmark members directly interacted with buyers, facilitated by AIACA's team.

The Show was very successful in terms of giving confidence, visibility and identity to the artisans and their skills. The artisans walked the ramp with the designers, and also interacted with various visitors and buyers at the stall. The appreciation that they received after the show was a great boost to their work and aspiration. The Craftmark enterprises also received orders from buyers visiting the B2B space. Though small in number, these orders are with prestigious stores and buyers, and if successfully fulfilled can turn into more long term market associations. Having orders at hand immediately after the show has also brought in a positive orientation for the Craftmark enterprises and the artisans towards business.

The Show has also brought women artisans, who are always otherwise limited to their homes in their villages, to the centre stage. The social media promotion and media coverage has brought pride to these women. In a few cases, the husbands of these women have created Facebook pages after the event and are re-sharing these media coverage and photographs of these women artisans on their own Facebook page and writing proudly about the achievements of their wives. According to the Craftmark enterprises this is a sea change that they have seen in an otherwise strictly patriarchal culture.

Glimpses from the Fashion Show



Models walking the ramp wearing Craftmark creations



Nabha artisan walking the ramp with designer



Roopa Mehta addressing the audience on Craftmark



Purkal artisan walking the ramp with designer



Craftmark team exhibiting the collections at the B2B area



## Capacity Building of the Craftmark members

The three Craftmark members - Purkal Stree Shakti, The Nabha Foundation, and Sandur Kushala Kala Kendra co-created their collections for the Lakme Fashion Week through intensive workshops with the designers and the AIACA team. Designer Anshu Arora worked with Sandur, Hetal Srivastava worked with Purkal and Sonal Chitranshi worked with The Nabha Foundation. It was a challenge to bring the artisans out of their comfort zone and to try something completely new that will add to their business. In the process, the entrepreneurs as well as the artisans gained from capacity enhancement for producing new products, design innovation, quality and finishing, pricing and costing and production management.

### Purkal Stree Shakti Samiti

Purkal Stree Shakti Samiti was set up as a social enterprise in 2003 in a small village called Purkal near Dehradun, with the goal of empowering the women of Purkal and the surrounding villages. The women of the region did not have any inherent craft skills, but they knew basic embroidery and stitching. Using this as a base, additional skills like patchwork, appliqué and embroidery were taught to them. The women learned to stitch together small pieces of fabric in geometric patterns which formed the base on which little details using appliqué and hand embroidery were added. This developed a whole new range of products comprising of quilts, utility bags, kitchen accessories and home furnishings. The Samiti, which joined the Craftmark program in 2010, at present works with about 160 women collectivized into SHGs. They launched their first patchwork - appliqué apparel collection at the Lakme fashion show.



### The Nabha Foundation

The Nabha Foundation launched The Phulkari Traditional Textile and Craft Program in 2007, as an income generation activity among women below the poverty level and to empower them towards self-sustainability. The focus was to create a long term business that would provide a feasible and steady income for women, avoiding migration and preserving the integrity of families in Nabha, while also preserving the art of authentic Phulkari embroidery. The traditional and authentic method of Phulkari embroidery is to count the threads of the warp and weft, but this method was almost lost with growing commercialization and the advent of quicker methods of production with traced patterns, which is now passed off as authentic Phulkari. They became a Craftmark member in 2015. The idea of taking this almost dying craft to Lakme fashion show was to boost the aspirations of the women embroiders to keep alive this 15<sup>th</sup> century tradition of Punjab through enhanced markets and business.



### Sandur Kushala Kala Kendra

Sandur Kushala Kala Kendra was setup in 1984 with 12 local Lambani women, with the objectives of encouraging the revival of indigenous crafts, ensuring a better life for these women artisans, finding new markets and making the crafts more relevant to modern tastes, and working towards a sustainable production process. Sandur, in Kannada, means “town between hills”. The Lambani women who belong to the nomadic tribe of the Banjaras are believed to have settled here as early as 14<sup>th</sup> century, and are experts in creating marvels with embroidery, decorative borders, mirrors, shells, coins. Today SKKK engages about 500 artisans who spin their own yarn, weave their own khadi fabric, print and dye in natural dyes, and embroider and stitch it in the same facility. Artisans are paid handsome wages along with various benefits such as subsidized ration, bonus, provident fund, free medical facilities, and scholarships for children's education. Sandur has been a Craftmark member since 2006.





Media Coverage

Media highlighted the unique contribution of Craftmark and how it is focusing on environmental aspects related to production as well.

TIMES OF INDIA



*“This show has the potential to elevate the perception of humble artisanal surface work to effective pieces of art with Craftmark positioned as the curator that not only ensures the genuineness of the craft but also one that nurtures the environment of the crafts person. Each craft has a sensory, sustainable and spiritual import and this show affords an amazing opportunity to deliver this relevance to the fullest.”- Vice President and Head of Fashion Jaspreet Chandok, IMG Reliance*

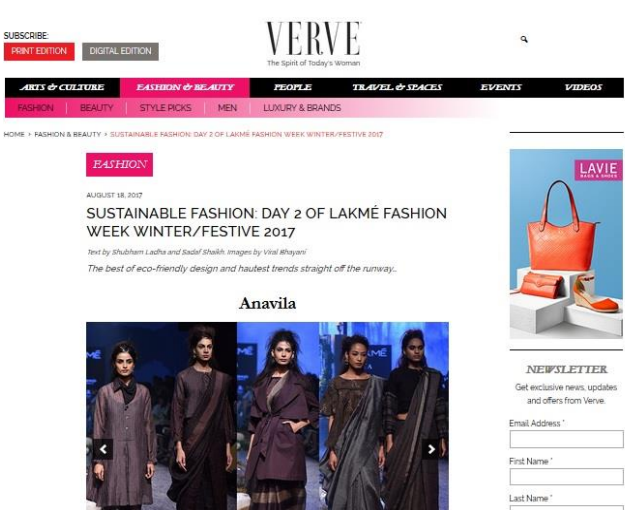
Sustainability is the new trend in Indian fashion. But what does it really stand for?



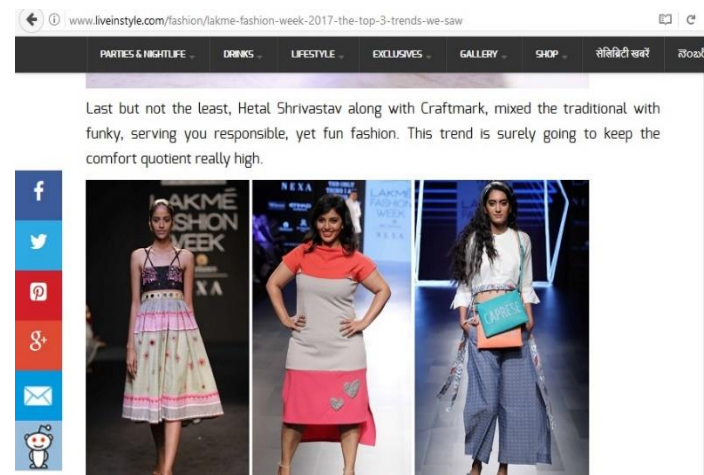
VOGUE



PUNJAB KESRI



LIVESTYLE.COM



Fashion with a Conscience

LFW Winter-Festive 2017 kept the sustainability conversation going on Day Two with partnerships between designers and artisans



(Clockwise from top) Model walk in collaborative creations for the #craftmark show; Adhuna Bhattacharya walks the ramp for Sobhya Misra's label, Chola; designer Anshu Anra took a bow with a Lambadi crafts woman





### KWWO goes digital!

AIACA has been working in Kota since 2014, primarily towards strengthening Kota Women Weavers Organization (KWWO), also known as Kota Bunkar Mahila Sanstha, located in Kaithun. Our efforts have focused on enabling KWWO to access greater market share and profit through access to new designs, building stock owned by KWWO, direct access to markets, and promotion of KWWO's brand.

With time, KWWO has grown into a more confident, better organized and market oriented organization engaged in new production, open to design innovation, use of azo-free dyes, and is taking active interest in their business development. The Ansari women weavers of KWWO are now selling directly to buyers through exhibitions and e-commerce portals. Some of the products have recently been featured on leading online stores/e-commerce websites such as Jaypore and Gaatha as well as in an in-store exhibition at the well known Bandhej shop of Ahmedabad.



Businesses are moving online and a growing number of craft enterprises are benefitting from the use of digital and social media platforms. Yet a number of small and medium scale rural enterprises remain uninformed about the ways of these media. Keeping in mind the new media trend, AIACA organized a workshop on the use of digital media for marketing and promotion in collaboration with Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) in May 2017 at Kota, Rajasthan. The goal of the workshop was to acquaint the women weavers and young women with digital tools and media and how they can be used for communication and promotion. A practical session on creating digital content about their products generated a lot of fun and enthusiasm.

### The changing face of Rajasthan's Phad Paintings

There is an incredible diversity in Indian folk paintings. Phad painting is a beautiful folk painting originating from Rajasthan. These paintings have their own styles and patterns and are known for their vibrant colors and historic themes. The word 'phad' means to read out. The representation of a phad is a combination of a panoramic presentation of folklore painted on a scroll accompanied by the melodious voice of bhopas who are professional bards. Shahpura phad painting is unique in many ways. The size of the figures portrayed in the painting depends on their social status and they always face each other instead of the viewer. Keeping in mind the growing market and the exclusivity of this art form, our Craftmark member Vijay Joshi, a renowned Phad artist sought support for product innovation as he and his fellow artists realized that diversification was critical for their business to grow. AIACA organized a Phad Painting design workshop focused on diversifying the product range so that the artists could sell all year to customers who do not want to buy expensive Phad paintings only. The application of Phad painting was tried out on diverse utilitarian and gift products - trays, coaster, gift boxes, key chains, fridge magnets, cushion covers, stoles and bags. The product line is ready and will soon be available in the market.

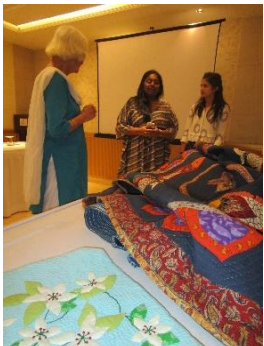




Craftmark Jury

Craftmark conducts an annual jury event for its members. Craftmark member organizations are invited to present their product samples to a panel of senior industry experts.

This year, eight members presented their work to an expert panel comprising of Shilpa Sharma (Co-Founder and Head, Jaypore), Kalyani Kunche (Head of Design, Triburg), Sudha Dhingra (Chairperson, Department of Fashion and Textiles – Textile Design, NIFT) and Vivek Sahni (Founder, Kama Ayurdeva). The members received valuable feedback on design development, emerging market trends, business opportunities, export readiness and potential markets to tap.



POLICY INITIATIVE

The Crafts Sector: A Green Perspective – Conference by AIACA

With over a decade’s experience of running the Craftmark certification for handcrafted products of India ensuring economic and social sustainability for artisans and crafts enterprises, AIACA felt that a dialogue should be initiated on aspects of environmental sustainability, an inherent quality of the Indian handicrafts sector. Based on the premise that the handicrafts and handloom sectors of India are essentially and traditionally environment friendly and carry the USP of being local, indigenous, culturally rooted, socially and economically enabling for the communities who have held these knowledge systems for centuries, a Policy Conference was organized by AIACA on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

This Policy Conference titled *“The Crafts Sector: A Green Perspective”* enabled multi-stakeholder participation in Delhi. Given the current conducive environment for the craft sector in the country, it was felt that this is a moment for pause and action. The more craft enterprises adopt ad hoc practices in response to and through dependencies on external markets, the more they would begin to dilute their traditionally green values and practices. In order to restore its original values and also leverage the 'green' opportunity, craft would be well-served by a collective and comprehensive enquiry into and compilation of 'green practices' and a credible standard/ benchmark of 'green-ness'.

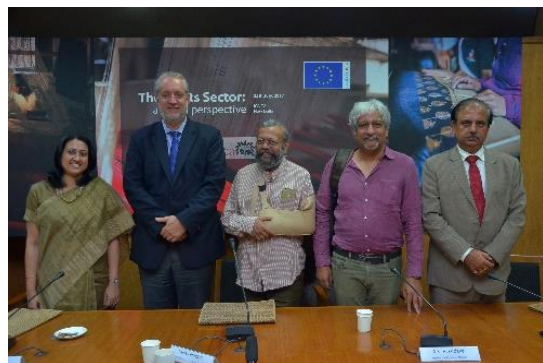


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Among the speakers were Mr. Johann H. Hesse, Counsellor and Head of Cooperation of European Union, Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Executive Director of EPCH, various crafts enterprises such as Avani, Bodhi, Ethicus, Hunnarshala, donors and banks, individual experts, markets, fashion brands and designers. The objective of the conference was to deliberate on the issues involved in positioning the craft sector as a green industry. Through a multi stakeholder dialogue, we tried to understand the context and meaning of 'green', forecast future trends and look at the possibility of instituting a rigorous system of assessing, enabling and building capacities for the craft sector to consolidate its place in a green economy. AIACA took this opportunity to present a framework for a green standard for the crafts sector – Craftmark Green, which it has developed through extensive research, building upon the Craftmark certification. An exhibition of best practices from across the country and AIACA's green interventions was also organized.



Session 1 panelists - From left to right (Madhura Dutta - ED, AIACA, Johann H. Hesse - Counsellor and Head of Cooperation - European Union, Sanjay Prakash - Principal Consultant - Studio for Habitat Futures, Arvind Lodaya - Designer and Strategic Thinker, Rakesh Kumar - ED, EPCH)



Session 3 panelists - From left to right (V.K.Madhavan - Chief Executive - WaterAid India, Srinivasan Iyer, Programme Officer - Ford Foundation, Malini Gupta - VP - RBS Foundation, Ashish Kumar - Deputy GM - EXIM Bank, Suruchi Khubchandani - Fellow- Culture, YES Bank Limited)

The response at the conference was overwhelming wherein participants unanimously voiced the need to ensure environmental sustainability as an essential component that calls for a collaborative effort by all actors working in this sector. It was discussed that the intersection between environmental vulnerability and economic vulnerability is critical and needs to be addressed. Best practices across the country towards environmental sustainability in the crafts sector were shared to reveal regional initiatives and projects that have attained success and have the potential to scale. Key issues discussed were awareness and capacity building of not only the producers but also of the consumers and the market about the significance and benefits of environmental sustainability; the need for long term investment in sustainable consumption and production activities, developing models for clean and efficient energy use, efficient production, regeneration of natural resources, waste management, raw material procurement, revival of traditional practices, establishing transparency in the value chain and branding and promotion.



Session 2 panelists - From left to right (Sushma Iyengar - Social Educator and Founder - Khamir, Rashmi Bharti - Co-Founder - Avani, Kiran Vaghela - Director, Hunnarshala, Pradeep Sinha - Founder - Bodhi, Vijayalakshmi Nachiar - Co-Founder and Creative Head - Ethicus)



Session 4 panelists - From left to right (Gautam Vazirani - Fashion Curator - IMG Reliance, Himanshu Shani - Co-Founder and Creative Director, Eleven Eleven, Archana Shah - Founder - Bandhej, Santanu Das - Founder - Maku Textiles, Shagun Khanna - Head Merchandiser - Ogaan, Annou Iyer - Founder and Director - RTW Magazine TrendLAB India)

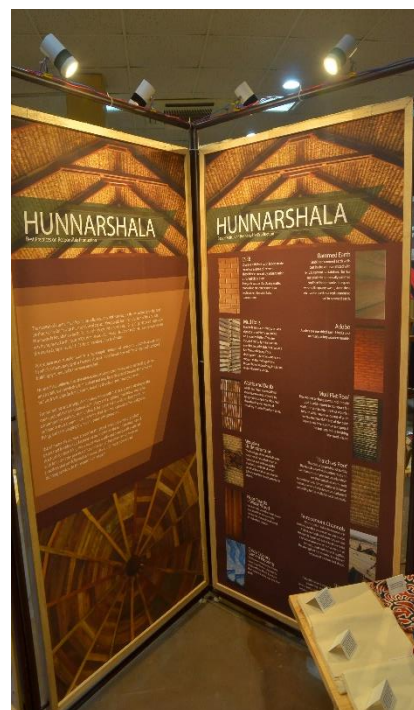
Recognition to be given to the crafts industry being already 'green' or having low carbon footprint was considered critical. In this regard, the need to map the sector in terms of its green practices and diversity would be the major step to assess the industry formally through a measure or certification. Finally, the fashion sector represented by leading designers working in sustainable fashion reiterated the importance of a green certification to support sustainable production for high end luxury brands and collections, highlighting the current market trends towards slow fashion. At the end of the conference, the participants committed to a collaborative action for taking the green initiative forward in this sector. This conference has been a major step in getting together practitioners and experts to start a movement towards restoring the original values of the sector as well as to leverage the 'green' opportunity therein.



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**Exhibition Stills – craft clusters with green interventions**



**Exhibition Stills – best practices in the industry**



**The participants**



**Vikram Joshi (MD, JITPPL)  
interacting on Green Technology**



**Ms. Rathi Vinay Jha (President,  
AIACA) and Ms. Roopa Mehta  
(VP, AIACA)**



**HANDCRAFTED TEXTILES for a Sustainable Future**

Traditional textiles in India narrate the story of our indigenous design aesthetic and culture. Each region offers a wealth of unique skills, distinctive range of textiles, using diverse materials and methods. The handcrafted sector is the second largest after agriculture, with close to 200 million artisans, of which about 30 million are involved in the hand crafted textile segment. Indian textiles have been valued and coveted over millennia, and it is to the credit of its traditional practitioners that these hand-skills have survived and evolved through all times. We stand at an advantage today, as craftspeople in India have not lost their inherited hand skills. Our artisans continue to have the ability and talent to recreate textiles that we admire in museums. Unfortunately, today the crafts sector has lost its traditional patronage, and therefore commercial viability. Design can play a very positive role in rejuvenating this sector. There is a lot of skill, but artisans need to develop fresh new products that are relevant for the fashion conscious urban markets that demand newness every season. Designers can equally benefit from this rich repertoire.

In a time when most artisans earn less than a person working at a construction site, there seems little incentive for them to continue their ancestral profession. With an experience of almost 40 years of closely collaborating with artisans to create contemporary fabrics for urban markets, I have been able to demonstrate that craft based products have a viable market in urban centers. Through collaborative partnerships, these valuable hand skills can be repurposed to become relevant again. Artisans would continue their traditional vocation only if it is financially rewarding and they are appreciated for their labour. It is widely believed that the high-end luxury market is the future for handcrafted textiles. These days, an increasing number of textile and fashion designers collaborate with artisans, giving this sector a fresh purpose and a wider visibility. This collaborative process is driven by mutual benefit and has transcended the stage where such initiatives were driven by philanthropy. These commercial initiatives mostly serve the luxury segment, which can best sustain a small number of artisans. Given the size and the diversity of the craft community, the market needs to expand substantially to benefit the large number of almost 30 million textile artisans.

It is envisaged that by 2025, over a billion people will lose their jobs to automation. With a growing concern for a large number of people losing their jobs to robotics, fears about climate change due to excessive use of fossil fuels and pollution, there is wisdom in developing the handcrafted sector, which is both labour intensive and eco-friendly. Through sensitive and appropriate design collaboration, without diluting the essence of the craft tradition, handcrafted skills can be repurposed to create contemporary textiles that generate interest in local and urban markets, both nationally and globally. Innovative marketing and appropriate promotions can develop a fresh awareness and make the handcrafted produce aspirational. We need to create new narratives for the handcrafted to become desirable products for the young who are sensitive and concerned about the wellbeing of our environment. The handcrafted sector has the potential to create large number of jobs without huge investments, and empower women and marginalized communities who are involved in this sector. It would provide sustainable livelihoods to households and communities in their own locations through the use of local resources, protecting them from the miseries of migration. If artisans find work within their village and there is access to education and basic healthcare, there would be little reason for most to migrate to cities. The community offers better security compared to living in slums, in overpopulated cities where jobs are getting more and more difficult. Handcrafted can be an eco-friendly and green means of production that is good for the environment, leaving a light carbon footprint that articulates our cultural identity in the age of globalization.

The handcrafted sector needs a vibrant platform for new synergies and collaborations. There is a need to shift from patronage to collaborative partnerships that create sustainable livelihoods for artisans that enable them to live their lives with dignity and encourage future generations of artisans to continue practising their ancestral profession. With the largest concentration of craft skills in the world, Indian artisans can make a very significant contribution in the search for a more socially just, inclusive and equitable planet, offering opportunities for sustainable development. We need to applaud and celebrate our ARTISANS, custodians of our rich cultural heritage.

**-Archana Shah, Founder – Bandhej**



## HIGHLIGHTS

### ABDULLAH RECEIVED SUTRAKAR SAMMAN

Abdullah, a handloom weaver from Mubarakpur Weaves (which is now an independent handloom weavers' enterprise set up and nurtured by AIACA India) receives prestigious "Sutrakar Samman" Award by Delhi Crafts Council for excellence in traditional skill of handloom weaving and sustenance through innovation.

### TEXTILE INDIA 2017

AIACA was invited to participate at a round table discussion on the importance of branding and quality assurance in the handloom sector, at the Textile India 2017 held by Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India, in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Craftmark also presented its products at this mega trade event that aimed to connect Indian handicrafts producers with global manufacturers, investors and buyers.

### AIACA TRAVELLED TO HELSINKI, FINLAND

As part of our Going Green project, AIACA was invited to participate in The World Circular Economy Forum 2017 (WCEF2017) from 5-7 June 2017, in Helsinki, Finland. The meeting brought together the world's leading experts in the field of circular economy — a total of around 1,500 participants from over 100 countries participated.

### FINANCIAL BENEFITS FOR ARTISANS AND WEAVERS

Working towards the overall economic and social upliftment of the artisans and weavers, AIACA has been able to link more than 5000 weavers and artisans to various government schemes who have availed financial benefits worth INR 20,565,000/-.

## CRAFTMARK EVENTS

- ❖ Kota Doriya instore Event (Ahmedabad) 16<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> September, Bandhej - showcasing Kota Women Weavers Organisation
- ❖ Saris of India 2017 (New Delhi) 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> October, Delhi Crafts Council - showcasing Mubarakpur Weaves
- ❖ Trunk Show Ahvanam (New Delhi) 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> October, showcasing Mubarakpur Weaves and Kota Women Weavers Organisation
- ❖ India Runway Week (New Delhi) 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> October, IFFD - showcasing Varanasi Weavers and Artisans Society
- ❖ Festival of Lights (New Delhi) 5<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> October, Dastkar - showcasing Mubarakpur Weaves
- ❖ Pre Diwali Exhibition (Mumbai) 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> October, showcasing Kota Women Weavers Organisation
- ❖ IHGF (New Delhi) 12<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> October, EPCH - showcasing Craftmark members
- ❖ Nature Bazaar (New Delhi) 9<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> Nov, Dastkar - showcasing Kota Women Weavers Organisation
- ❖ World Fair Trade Week (New Delhi) 8<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> Nov, Fair Trade Forum India - showcasing Craftmark members and Mubarakpur Weaves and Haldipada Bamboo Works
- ❖ A Hundred Hands (Bangalore) 29<sup>th</sup> Nov – 3<sup>rd</sup> December, showcasing Varanasi Weavers and Artisans Society
- ❖ Azamgarh Festival (New Delhi) 9<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> December, Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development (ITRHD) – showcasing Mubarakpur Weaves
- ❖ Bhimtadi Jatra (Pune) 22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> December, Agriculture Development Trust Baramati - showcasing Mubarakpur Weaves