

## **Institutional Network for Development of Handicrafts in Assam**

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Assam is very famous for handicrafts since time immemorial. The handicrafts like working in metal, ivory, wood, leather, clay, cane, bamboo and like and their reputation was almost equal to that of the artisans of other regions of contemporary India. Handicrafts in Assam has its define identity due to its social, cultural and economic importance. The handicrafts bear the witness of many cultures, races, traditions and civilization and these have been preserved by the long experience craftsmen of Assam. It is to be noted that weaving, textile, jewellery, pottery, wood works, stone carving, sital pati, doll making, toy making, bell-metal, ivory works, tannery works, leather works, cane and bamboo work etc. are included in handicrafts in Assam. Assam is very often called for land of colourful handicrafts products. It is to be noted that the development of industries is the primary responsibility of state subject under the constitution of India. However, the central government is supplementing different schemes for growth and development in our country. It is seen that most of the states have established development corporations for handicrafts. These corporations are active mainly to help artisans in production and marketing in India. This paper is actually a modest attempt to discuss the institutional network for development of handicrafts in the state of Assam.

The paper is structured as follows. Section I represents a brief study on the institutional network for handicrafts in the North-Eastern states as well as in India. Section II is devoted to study of the institutional network for development of handicrafts in Assam. Section III presents a brief account of role of the NGOs in the development of handicrafts and drawn the conclusion of the study.

### **Section-I**

As we know that both central and state government has announced various policies for development of handicrafts industry after the independence of India.

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The All India Handicrafts Board (AIHB) was established in 1952 under the Chairmanship of Kamaladevie Chattopadhyay to study the problems, prospects, preserves and take necessary steps for the development and improvement of the handicrafts in India. The Board was reconstituted as the All India Handlooms and Handicrafts Board (AIHHB) in 1981 to take positive step on both handlooms and handicrafts in India. For the rapid growth of handicrafts sector in India, a broad based programme was undertaken by the state government providing credit, training facilities, technical advice, supply of improved tools and marketing facilities during the planning periods. The central government has stressed the need to develop the handicrafts industry in order to widen the field of employment and to produce the saleable items so that a self-sustained agrarian economy can be achieved in the country. Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI), New Delhi, National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad and Industrial Design Centre, IIT, Mumbai are working to popularize the cane and bamboo crafts in India. The central government has setup the Handicrafts and Handlooms Export Corporation (HHEC) and the Central Cottage Industries Emporium (CCIE) to provide assistance in internal and external marketing of handicrafts products in India.

In order to develop handicrafts sector, a number of state, regional and central level organizations have been setup in the North-Eastern region. All states have KVI Boards in the North-Eastern region. It is to be noted that for development of handicrafts, there are state level corporation in Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura in the region. The state Directorates of Industries look after the development of handicrafts in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. The Manipur Handlooms and Handicrafts Development Corporation (MHHDC) was established in 1976. The Nagaland Handlooms and Handicrafts Development Corporation (NHHDC) was formed in 1979. The Tripura Handlooms and Handicrafts Development Corporation (THHDC) is playing an important role for the development of the handicrafts in the state. The Meghalaya Handicrafts Development Corporation (MHDC) has been playing a positive role for the development of handicrafts in the under developed states.

### **Section-II**

New process has been started for the development of handicrafts after independence in Assam. After independence in 1951, a cottage Industries Training Institute was established at Guwahati to impart training in black-smithy, carpentry, leather works, bamboo and cane works, doll and toy making, potteries,

electroplating and electric wiring, gas welding and nail making in the state. Some of the organizations which have taken the responsibility of various measures for the growth and development of handicraft are mentioned below.

**1. The Assam Khadi and Village Industries Board - AKVIB:**

The AKVI Board was established in 1953 to encourage the development of Khadi and Village industries in the state. The Board has been implementing various programmes for development of khadi and village industries including handicrafts in an organized way with a view to generating rural employment and for upliftment of basic economic structure of rural area of Assam. The Board has also provided of necessary assistance to the artisans for promotion of cane and bamboo industry in Assam.

**2. The Khadi and Village Industries Commission - KVIC:**

The KVIC was established in 1957 with headquarterd in Mumbai, under Ministry of Industry, Govt. of India. The KVIC has promoted and supported to cane and bamboo works and others 30 major village industries. The KVIC has a separate directorate for cane and bamboo industry. The KVIC works through Khadi and Village Industry Boards in the states. The KVIC has decided to set up a raw material bank for the North Eastern zone. The policy undertaken for strengthening KVIC in the North Eastern zone included introduction especial funding models for rapid implementation of suitable activities in the North Eastern zone. The KVIC is also playing an important role for the expansion and modernization of village industries including cane and bamboo works in the state of Assam.

**3. The Assam Government Marketing Corporation Ltd. - AGMC:**

The AGMC was set up in December 1958 with chief objectives of marketing the items of handicrafts and small scale and cottage industries in the state. The AGMC headquarter is situated at Guwahati. The corporation during the last decade dedicated towards the modernization, preservation and patronage of the traditional crafts of the state by encouraging and assisting the master artisans. The AGMC also has taken up different steps to modernize the traditional cane and bamboo in Assam. The corporation has set up sales emporium for the products of cane and bamboo industry within the state as also in metropolitan cities like Delhi and Kolkata. The corporation has been recently transferred to the Sericulture

and Weaving Department of Assam.

**4. The Assam Apex Weavers and Artisans Co-Operative Federation Ltd. - ARTFED:**

The ARTFED was established in 1977 with headquarter in Guwahati. The ARTFED has been initiating various positive steps to promote wood crafts, cane and bamboo items, bell and brass metal items, decorative textile crafts etc. through regional, national and international markets. It is known that this organization earning profit unlike other government sponsored business organization in the state. The total net profit was 32.46 lakh in the year 2003-2004 in Assam. The organization has set up sales emporium for various handicraft products at different parts of the state. It plays a key role in encouraging the handicrafts artisan in Assam.

**5. The North Eastern Handicrafts and Handloom Development Corporation - NEHHDC:**

The NEHHDC was established in 1977 by the Government of India with the main objectives to develop handicrafts and handloom sector in the North Eastern region. The organization provides technical, financial and other support to local master artisans and to promote sales handicrafts items through its own emporium in various places. It has also taken the responsibility for the expansion and market diversification of the cane and bamboo items of Assam and other states of North Eastern region. With the patronage of this corporation, the handicraft products of North Eastern states has been sent around the country and abroad through its emporium, expositions and crafts fairs. The organization has been playing an important role in offering the facility of supply of raw materials, advancing working capital and marketing facilities to handicrafts units including cane and bamboo units in the North East India.

**6. District Industries Center and Commerce - DICC:**

The DIC was started from May 1978 at the district level as nodal agency in order to develop village and small industries sector. In nineties the DIC was renamed as DICC. The DICC has been playing a key role in formulating various policies for the benefiting of different types of artisans in the state. The district level organization has extended micro credit support to the artisans in all districts of Assam. The Industrial policy of Assam, 1991 has emphasized the need to strengthen the DICCs in view of the key roles played by these in the growth of

various small scale industries and handicrafts units in all districts. As a prime lending district level organization, the role of organization in the future development of the handicrafts sector would be critical in Assam.

**7. The Development Commissioner - Handicrafts - DC(H):**

This central government agency headquarter is situated in Delhi. The DC (H) a Regional Director office for North Eastern region, is situated in Guwahati. The DC (H) set up a development centre for tribal crafts at Jorhat in 1975. On the other hand, a marketing and service extension centre was set up at Gauripur in 1976. The DC (H) gives financial support to the artisans and to hold cane and bamboo exhibitions in different areas like Mumbai, Delhi etc. The financial support is an opportunity for the craftsmen in remote areas to reach large markets and get good returns for their products in Assam. The DC (H) also has been playing an urgent role to develop cane and bamboo handicrafts for best use and generate self employment in the state.

**8. The Assam Small Industries Development Corporation - ASIDC:**

The state government of Assam has set up ASIDC in 1962 with headquarter at Guwahati. The organization is actively engaged in building up small scale industrial units including handicrafts units in Assam. Moreover, the corporation has opened a number of different types of small scale units under its own management and also rendering services for promotion and extension of different schemes such as seed money assistance scheme for the small industries sector in the state. The organization has been playing a positive role to accelerate the process of development and diversification of handicrafts sector in Assam.

**9. The Cane and Bamboo Technology Centre - CBTC:**

The CBTC was setup at Guwahati under United Nations Development Programmer (UNDP) scheme in 1999. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has formulated projects in order to encourage the cane and bamboo industry in the North-East India. The UNIDO is assigned implementation agency, the North-Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd. (NEDIFi) is the field implementation agency and is responsible for project activities carried CBTC. For enough awareness among the people about the prospects of industrial and handicrafts sector utilizing cane and bamboo resources CBTC has organized various workshops and exhibitions in the state.

**10. North-Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd. - NEDFi:**

Union Finance Minister announced the setting up of a separate development bank for the North-Eastern region in his budget speech for the year 1995-96. NEDFi was registered under the companies Act 1956 on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1995. This institution headquarter is situated in Guwahati. The basic objective of NEDFi is to provides financial assistance to micro, small, medium and large enterprises for setting up industrial, infrastructure projects in the region. NEDFi Haat, NEDFi convention center and NEDFi pavillion are the promotional activities of the institution. NEDFi Haat has helped to commercialise and promote the traditional handicraft products of the region. In short, NEDFi Haat is considered as an important initiative to facilitate a platform to the craftsmen in the region. It is expected that NEDFi would be able to solve the problems of rural craftsmen to a large extent in the entire North-Eastern region.

**Section-III**

Its is seen that some NOGs have been playing an important role in the social and economic development in our country. It is to be noted that in different areas various type of NGOs have been established for the development of handicrafts in the state. Some NGOs also are availed the various assistance from the government for the expansion and modernization of handicrafts industry in the state. It can be noted that NGOs like Crafts Council of Assam, Guwahati, Nalbari District Cane and Bamboo Industry Development Samity, Nalbari, Dhubri Hastashilpa Samabai Samity, Dhubri, Assam Handicrafts Development society, Goalpara and Cane and Bamboo Furniture Co-operative Society, Kokrajhar availed the assistance under the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), North Eastern region scheme during the 9th plan in Assam. On the national level, the Bamboo Society of India (BSI), Bangalore is working to popularize the cane and bamboo crafts in India. The world-wide organization 'International Network for Bamboo and Rattan' (INBAR) was established in 1997 to provide coordination, leadership and support for research and development of cane and bamboo sector of its member countries including India.

It can be concluded that the climatic condition of Assam is very suitable for handicrafts which make the industry and economically viable preposition for the artisans in the state. The climatic condition is very favourable for the handicrafts industry in the state. The government of Assam needs to give priority to this industry. Social development is impossible without development of handicrafts



industry. The industry is not only employment intensive but also has huge social significance. The handicrafts industry can be developed without creating environmental degradation. If handicrafts industry can be developed properly, this industry will help in increasing employment opportunity and increase of income in Assam. The history of five decades of economic planning reveals that though the government has taken some measures to solve the different problems of the handicrafts industry but the measures so far taken are inadequate to solve the various measures fully due to financial resources in Assam. It is expected that the central and state government will take positive step for development of handicraft industry in such a manner so that it can attain the economically viable at its earliest in the under developed state of Assam.

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