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TRAINING COURSES IN LEATHERGOODS DESIGN - PATTERN MAKING AND LEATHERGOODS TECHNOLOGY

(Calcutta - India)

FINAL REPORT

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1. LEATHER INDUSTRY IN INDIA

Leather sector - including tanning, footwear, footwear components, leathergoods and leather garments industries - represents a productive sector playing an important role in India as it is able to export a big part of its production.

The last figures related to the export in this sector (for the financial year 1st April 1997 - 31st March 1998) show a value of 1589 millions dollars; while in the previous financial year the export reached 1602 millions dollars.

In particular, as the table 1 here under clearly shows, leathergoods sector - and the footwear components industry as well - is the only one that managed to increase its export from 294.24 to 342.16 million dollars in the last financial year.

Table 1

	<i>(Value in Millions US\$)</i>	
Category	1996-97	1997-98
Finished Leather	301.06	290.60
Leather Footwear	337.45	272.10
Footwear Components	222.74	239.88
Leather Garments	424.37	417.16
Leathergoods	294.24	342.16
Saddlery & Harness	25.96	26.82
Total	1602.82	1589.11

2. LEATHER INDUSTRY IN CALCUTTA

Calcutta represents one of the most important centres of the leather industry in India; in fact the area of Calcutta produces 200 millions dollars of export (out of a total production of 1589 millions dollars) of the whole sector.

Tanneries are the most important industries in Calcutta, in particular those producing safety gloves but, above all, leathers goods items.

As a matter of fact Calcutta represents the most important Indian centre for leathers goods production; that's the reason why the exhibition "India International Leathers Goods Fair" takes place every year in March (this year it reached its 5th edition) in Calcutta.

In order to realise the importance of the leathers goods industry in Calcutta, it must be pointed out that out of 342.18 millions dollars - representing the value of the export of the leathers goods industry in India - over 130 millions dollars consist of productions of local industries located in the capital of the West Bengal State.

Recently the leathers goods industry in Calcutta has showed a growth in the production of small leathers goods items such as belts, wallets and a reduction in the large leathers goods articles (bags etc...)

As it has already been mentioned in the reports concerning the four (4) training courses on leathers goods design, pattern making and leathers goods technology, leathers goods industry in Calcutta - despite the big progress of last years - needs some support interventions.

As a matter of fact, in spite of important advantages such as low labour cost, availability of raw material, a long tradition in this sector) , there are still some problems (image of the product, lacking of organisation and of technological innovation) that make the local leathers goods industry vulnerable and exposed to an international competitiveness which becomes more and more strong and difficult.

The technological innovation, the increase of the variety, of the quality and quantity of the production and a major market orientation of the firms represent the most important aspects of a support programme destined to the local industry.

One of the instruments able to reach the above mentioned objectives is represented by the training of the young people who have to enter the industry after the school, but also of the technicians who are already working in the leathers goods industry in Calcutta and of the managers as well.

All this must be made along with a programme consisting of:

- an updating on leathersgoods design at global level
- technological innovations and business administration system
- a market evolution at international level

3. TRAINING COURSES

The four courses organised by Assomac - two of them in the design and pattern-making, the other two in the leathersgoods technology - gave the trainees (young people waiting for the job in the industry and technicians already working in local industries) the chance to learn the most advanced know-how.

In particular:

- leathersgoods design and pattern making: theoretical explanation of the materials and of each production phase; practical realisation of small and large leathersgoods items which were then used to put together a real collection;
- leathersgoods technology: realisation of small and large leathersgoods items, visits by the experts to leathersgoods industries where the trainees worked in order to point out the critical points and find some solutions on this matter.

4. FINAL SUGGESTIONS

These final considerations show the importance of a future training programme like the one that has already been completed over the last months.

The organization of another series of training courses of design, pattern-making and leathersgoods technology will certainly bring other benefits to the leathersgoods sector in Calcutta.

In the organization of other training courses some important aspects must be taken into consideration:

- 15/20 trainees for each course. With a high number of trainees it is difficult for the expert to check what each trainee has been learning;
- the trainees of each course should have a quite homogeneous work experience, as the presence of various levels of experiences in a class could give bad results to the course.

The knowledge of the leathersgoods industry in Calcutta showed the need to organise also a "Master" destined to managers, in order to teach them technical information and those behaviours which are necessary for the role they have in the industry.

The "Master" will consider fashion trends and technical details applied by the firms on their products, as well as the flexibility of the same firms, their productivity, quality, prices and competitiveness in third party work.

The "Master" will consist of the following topics: competitive leathersgoods technologies, innovative production process, design and pattern-making, management and production organisation, marketing and firms' competitiveness.