

DNA Anchor Project director of study conducted by Harvard Univ South Asia Institute was in city on Saturday

'Indian artisans can beat others in diversity of craft'

Dr Shah suggests NGOs should work on networking, marketing & finance

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Ahmedabad: Piyush Lakhania is a 50-year-old Pithora artisan who uses the craft on canvases and t-shirts. Although, he has joined a local non-profit organisation, he might find it difficult to sell his product abroad.

But a team of Harvard University South Asia Institute which conducted a 20-month-long study in 18 states of India including Gujarat to study various issues that artisans face suggest that artisans should find a way to connect with

international clients.

DNA caught up with Dr Shashank Shah, project director of the study titled 'Livelihood creation in India through social entrepreneurship and skill development', who was in Ahmedabad on Saturday.

When asked about the shortcomings in the social sector, Shah said, "After meeting heads of various non-profit organisations, we observed three major shortcomings. We felt that NGOs can improve upon marketing, market access and networking; finance and fund raising; and, scaling and strategies."

He claimed there were not enough means of formally documenting various NGOs. Shah said the NGOs can explore the option of raising funds through Corpo-



Dr Shashank Shah in conversation with DNA

rate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Shah said during the project, the team found that there was a trend where non-profit organisations act as middleman for artisans and urban population which

seeks fusion of rural art and urban fabric.

"Artisans and NGOs should try to aim at the international audience. They should learn to aim beyond local. There is so much

Social media and e-commerce can help

Survey for the study was carried out from August 2015 to March 2016 in 18 states including Gujarat.

Dr Shashank Shah, project director of the study claimed that social sector employs at least 20 crore people from rural India.

"Majority of the NGOs are not able to access the market where the artisans' crafts can be well-received. During our workshop with representatives of 52 NGOs, we found that many of them did not even know about each other!" said Shah.

He suggested social media and e-commerce can be the solution.

diversity in India as all the states have their own culture. When you compare it to the US and UK, you will find that they have a repetitive design of clothes," Shah said.

He went on to say that the arti-

sans (or the NGOs that work for them) should test the waters for international clients with social media and then go for e-commerce. There is a lot to gain from the digital age, he added.