



Press Kit

Label STEP at Domotex 2012

14 – 17 January 2012, Hannover

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Come see us at Domotex in hall 20, stand C18/1

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Press Release

LABEL STEP SETS THE AGENDA AT DOMOTEX

The Swiss fair trade Label STEP is again represented at the Domotex, the leading trade fair for handmade carpets (January 14 – 17, Hannover). The organisation brings urgent social and ecological topics from the carpet industry to the floor, and explains why fairly produced and traded carpets are existential for the future of the branch. Country representative Ismail Wameq is travelling from Afghanistan to report on the newest Label STEP initiative.

At the same time, the label supports its partners in the field: Many exhibiting designers and traders at the fair are licence holders of the label, and commit themselves to the label's fair trade standard in their production and trade of their carpets.

Passionate Partners

The youngest partner of Label STEP is Julia Gèsine Stefan, who is starting her own carpet label under the name *Bó Hamsa*. The collection will be presented at the fair for the first time. The goal of *Bó Hamsas* is to inspire passionate interior worlds and lifestyles. The designer conveys her interest in ethnological tribal textiles, art, fashion and craft, bringing contemporary carpet design to a new generation. (*hall 20, stand C18*).

Other Label STEP licence holders at the fair are *Creative Matters (Halle 20, B16)*, *Jan Kath (hall 20, B15)*, *Knots Rugs (hall 20, C16)*, *Makalu Design (hall 20, B02)*, *Mischioff (hall 20, B20)* and *Paulig Teppiche (hall 4, C19)*.

Label STEP looks forward to meeting companies who are not yet licence holders at their own stand *C18/1 in hall 20* and calls on the carpet trade to get involved as fair trade partners for the future of the branch.

Afghanistan in Focus

For more than 15 years, Label STEP has been committed to fair conditions in the production and trade of handmade carpets. In addition to India, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Nepal, Pakistan and Turkey, the organisation has been active in Afghanistan for the past year, where they are supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). Label STEP is consequently the only organisation with liaison offices in every important carpet producing country.

In Afghanistan, Label STEP is primarily improving the working and living conditions of the carpet weavers: Following a comprehensive study, self-help initiatives were established in carpet villages and supervised by Label STEP employees. At the same time, medical care of the carpet weavers, many living below the poverty line, was improved. Long-term undertakings in the form of educational activities about basic rights, fair wages and health in the workplace seek to improve their situation. At the national level, Label STEP is lobbying for the introduction of minimum wages for carpet workers and raising awareness about fair trade standards among producers and exporters. The development work in Afghanistan is especially valuable,

because carpets are one of their most important export goods. At least one million Afghans are employed through the carpet industry.

The Label STEP country representative in Afghanistan, Ismail Wameq, will attend the fair and is available to the press for the first time.

Read the *Rug World News*

Label STEP introduces its activities in the *Rug World News*, a newspaper published specifically for the Do-motex. The rules for the carpet trade are presented in it. Also available to read in the paper is how the organisation is active in individual countries of production. Consistently, the main topics include the fight for fair wages, healthy working conditions, school education for the children of carpet weavers as well as the conservation of the weaving tradition. Furthermore, Label STEP contributes to ecologically responsible production. For instance, water filtration facilities were constructed in Nepali dyeing mills.

Label STEP – fair trade with handcrafted carpets

The fair trade Label STEP distinguishes carpet traders who are socially committed to carpet workers: For good working conditions and environmentally friendly production methods, for fair purchasing prices and equitable wages, against abusive child labour and for independent monitoring of their production.

These fair trade guidelines are not only applicable for individual carpets of a Label STEP license holder, but for their entire assortment of handmade carpets. The licence holders are obligated to disclose the entirety of their purchases and supply chains, to submit to monitoring and introduce improvement measures where necessary.



Press Meetings Invitation

AFGHANISTAN – A STEP OUT OF THE CRISIS WITH FAIR TRADE CARPETS

For the past year, Label STEP has been active in Afghanistan, the first organisation fighting for fair carpet trade and good working conditions for weavers and workers. From January 14th until January 17th 2012 at the Domotex Fair in Hannover, we will be reporting on the strategies and successes of this development cooperation, as well as the barriers and problems in one of the least developed countries in the world. Our country representative Ismail Wameq, who is working in Afghanistan for Label STEP, will be personally attending and is available to the press for the first time. Please contact us for an appointment.

Handmade carpets are among Afghanistan's most important export goods, despite extended phases of political instability, war and terror. It is estimated that at least one million Afghans are directly or indirectly employed through the carpet industry. Afghan carpets are of the best quality that the market has to offer. In addition to traditional oriental carpets, contemporary designs have lately won international accolades. The Afghan pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2005 certainly also boosted the success of the Afghan carpet.

The reality on the ground is difficult: Poverty is reflected in high illiteracy rates (about 57 per cent among men, more than 87 per cent among women) and the fact that one third of the population live below the poverty line. The carpet industry workers are often unfamiliar with their basic rights and do not receive a fair wage. Many families lack access to health care and schools – girls are especially deprived of a school education.

With the support of the **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)**, Label STEP carefully prepared their work in Afghanistan with an initial comprehensive socio-economic field study of carpet weaving in the country. Based on the resulting findings and experience from other countries, carpet weavers in Afghanistan should first and foremost be empowered to improve their situation on their own. Label STEP helps them to organise, to exchange and to improve their situation together. As part of the Label STEP Team, a doctor and community worker provide information about healthy working and have already enabled doctor's visits for more than 1,000 female carpet weavers.

Alongside daily work in villages, Label STEP makes contact with local producers and exporters, and is excited about their great willingness to collaborate. Contact with public authorities and government has already been made in order to represent the interests of the carpet weavers: The main goals are to increase wages, access to social services and government promotion for the carpet branch.

Label STEP is confident in the continual increase of international interest in Afghan carpets. Fair trade ensures that the carpet weavers will also profit from this development.

We are happy to tell you more about our work in Afghanistan from first hand accounts, and to coordinate interviews with employees, designers and partners. Please contact us for an appointment, or if you should need photo material or additional information.

For more than 15 years, Label STEP has been committed to fair conditions in the production and trade of handmade carpets. In addition to India, Iran, Morocco, Nepal and Pakistan, the Swiss organisation is newly active in Afghanistan. Label STEP is consequently the only organisation with liaison offices in every important carpet producing country. In Afghanistan, Label STEP is supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).



Press Release

BÓ HAMSA – IN THE TRACKS OF CURIOSITY

The young designer Julia Gèsine Stefan is starting her own carpet label Bó Hamsa – from the outset with fair trade Label STEP. The newcomer is presenting her premium collection to the public and trade experts at the Domotex Fair for the first time. Thanks to ideal partnerships, the success is assured.

Julia Gèsine Stefan is launching her first collection with established carpet dealer Mohammad Kazem Haghnegahdar in Hamburg (Modam GmbH). Haghnegahdar is a giant in the German carpet scene. Together, they share a passion for beautiful carpets and traditional handicraft.

The Bó Hamsa label unites Julia Gèsine Stefan's bold and modern designs with traditional knotting techniques – resulting in audacious overtones, thrilling to both clients and carpet professionals. With Bó Hamsa, she crafts haute couture for the floor – artistically ambitious and poles apart from mass production. Label STEP is very pleased that for Julia Gèsine Stefan it was beyond question to follow the label's Fair Trade Guidelines right from the start.

Customers can rest assured that carpet weavers work under fair conditions. The Bó Hamsa carpets are made in Nepal, one of the focus countries of Label STEP. The haute couture for the floor ensures the livelihood of the craftspeople. The advantage of fair trade in the Nepali carpet industry is palpable: workplaces are secure, well-lit and clean. The workers' children sit at school desks rather than looms. Apartments are provided by the employer, who often also helps support health and education costs. In dyeing the wool and silk, Label STEP promotes the use of environmentally friendly dyes and supports the construction of purification plants. Label STEP regularly assesses the cost of living and compares this against the salaries being paid in the carpet branch.

The goal of Bó Hamsa is to inspire passionate interior worlds and lifestyles. The designer connects different disciplines and conveys her interest in ethnological tribal textiles, art, fashion, and craft, *“I am curious about the world. The tracks of my trips and research are echoed in my carpets. The customer can take these worlds into their living room in the form of a collection. As a designer and importer, I have the additional opportunity to take social responsibility. That is one of the reasons I decided to work with Label STEP.”*

Julia Gèsine Stefan studied surface and textile design at the Kunsthochschule KHB Weißensee, characterized by their Bauhaus influence. Following several months in Marrakesh, she dedicated herself to carpet design and craft, setting the goal to reinterpret this tradition. With that, she decided as a young designer against the short-lived fashion circus, transferring her commitment to one of humanity's oldest cultural assets.

Julia Gèsine Stefan is located at the DOMOTEX in Halle 20, Stand C18 – right next to Label STEP!



Feedback Form

Label STEP – Invitation for journalists

- I would like to get in touch with the representatives of Label STEP and will visit the Stand at **DOMOTEX 2012, Halle 20, Stand C18/1**

Please organize an appointment with:

Label STEP-Team

- Isamail Wameq (Label STEP Afghanistan)
- Reto Aschwanden (Label STEP – Commercial Director)
- Magdalena Stranner (Label STEP – Director)

STEP-Partner

- Jan KATH Design (D) – Halle 20, Stand B15
- Bó Hamsa (D) – Halle 20, Stand C 18
- Paulig Teppiche (D) – Halle 4, Stand C19
- Makalu Design (D) – Halle 20, Stand B02
- Mischioff (CH) – Halle 20, Stand B20
- Creative Matters (CAN) – Halle 20, Stand B16
- Knot Rugs (UK) – Halle 20, Stand C16

- Please add me to your distribution list, I would like to get all updates in the future.

NAME: _____
MEDIA/RESSORT: _____
CELL PHONE _____
E-MAIL _____

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