

# Aid to Artisans



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Fall 2016

# Pakistan's Heritage Makes its Way Across the Globe





Pakistani crafts have not effectively accessed markets beyond the country's borders and need success in international markets for long-term sustainability. There has been a noticeably subtle yet persistent pessimism amongst artisans about ancient skills dying out.

However, the [Indus Heritage Trust \(IHT\)](#) with support from ATA, through the RANG project, is determined to add a modern flair and contemporary style to preserve and take this traditional craft overseas. The greatest strength of Pakistani textile craft is the beauty and cultural significance of the embroidery. Nearly as important is the large weaving capacity which IHT takes advantage of together with the available textile capacities and natural dyeing methods and finally blending in the beautiful embroidery skills that makes it exclusive.

The overall goal of RANG ("color" in Urdu) is to improve livelihoods of rural artisans in the provinces of Punjab and Sindh by primarily alleviating poverty and improving living conditions for embroiderers, most of them women and girls, and their families. The project aims to assist around 2,600 vulnerable artisan households, especially those headed by women, at the bottom of the economic pyramid. Averaging 7 members in each family in the project areas, RANG is expected to benefit a population of about 18,200 individuals, about 70% of them women.



"We are really happy especially for the provision of livelihood at our doorsteps. We are also thankful to IHT for taking us to a forum where we can rightly portray our potential. Our stitches are unique, but we did not have proper exposure. We are thankful for this opportunity that gave us new designs and skills to enhance their products through skills workshop," states a master weaver.

During the Fall 2016, two ATA International Designers along with the IHT designer team have been busy developing two main lines, Virasat (Heritage) and Rang (Color) that will be the main product lines for the upcoming NY NOW in February 2017.

Virasat and Virsa design focus is composed of classic new linens, organic cotton, hand embroidery, indigenous heritage motifs and detail with a neutral color palette of warm ivory and natural whites. In contrast the Rangeen collection, their star features comprise of floor and bed throw pillows in bold colorful collection.

“We have very good perception about the west that international markets would open new and great avenues for our skill development and product sale,” said one of the participating artisans.

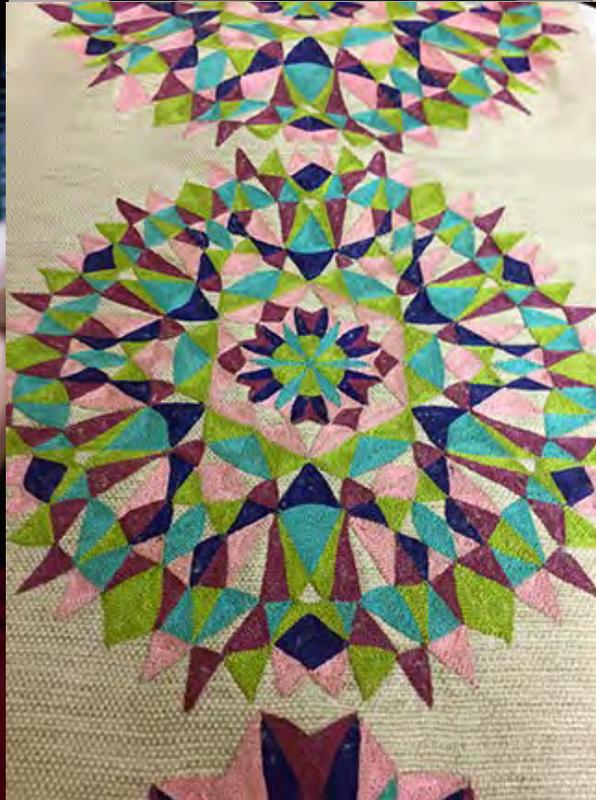
The new design plan consists of a collection of home décor, table top, bedding, and embroidered scarves. These collections are being developed through long distance collaboration and training.



Project coordinator Mehreen Aslam attributes IHT artisans' new found confidence to ATA designers who have been providing guidance and ideas for presenting the product line at NY NOW. "We are looking forward to long-distance training provided by ATA in marketing and packaging. The real test of our efforts will depend on the outcome at NY NOW" says Aslam.

Chairperson Siddiqa Malik states "My vision is to make IHT into a model organization in the preservation, revival, promotion and production of Pakistan's traditional arts in textiles." She would also like IHT to help grass roots level artisans to organize themselves into groups to become entrepreneurs. We wish IHT team and artisans the very best in sharing their skills and talents in taking Pakistan to the world in a dynamic way at NY NOW in February 2017.

Please make sure to stop by the ATA booth at NY NOW this February to check this new product line.



# Gender Training in Chiapas Broadens Horizons





With great enthusiasm, [ATA Mexico](#) has been successfully assisting 10 indigenous textile groups comprising of 310 artisans from neighboring villages of Chiapas region through our CASE Project. This intimate collaboration between artisans and designers that tells stories of Mexico through textiles and weaving. Part of CASE addresses gender issues deeply rooted in Maya society that constrain the development of artisan's skills set and their business growth. With this in mind, ATA launched a new pilot to address this gender issues.



The program brought male and female artisans together to experience a revolutionary training during the months of September and October. ATA organized this first of its kind training with a goal to overcome cultural constraints that hinder women's efforts to develop businesses. The workshop was geared toward both women artisans and their husbands.

Traditionally, village women in Chiapas have raised children and done household chores, having little input into family decisions. In Chiapas, the husband is the head of the family. Women weavers—wives and mothers-- knit and weave shawls and ponchos in groups as a social activity to pass time after their duties at home are completed.

**Under the CASE project, women artisans have been encouraged to work in a professional capacity to produce for domestic and international markets. This involves women travelling outside of the village to attend workshops, to procure raw material and network with similar organizations. Naturally, this change in their role has resulted pressures for women, their husbands and the family as a whole.**

**ATA Mexico staff and experts were given the task of carrying out a gender training plan pertaining to address the situation. Eight men and 31 women artisans participated in the workshops that raised awareness of gender in relation to their situation. The participants exposed the challenges, and opportunities in the new role of the women so that they could work in favorable family and social conditions. Mixed-gender groups were formed that led to open discussion where the men and women expressed themselves freely and understood each other's perspectives. Based on these interactions they developed strategies to support each other as individuals and as a family unit.**

**An immediate change noticed as a result of the workshop was the difference in behavior of group leaders; they became more confident about speaking in public and exchanging ideas.**



"Having joined the ATA project, participating, traveling, finding value in their work, knowing that there is a market to sell their handicrafts gives women security, satisfaction and makes them happy" stated an artisan's husband, who participated in the workshop.

Men who attended the workshop were more open to helping their wives by attending to infants and small children while their spouse worked on the loom in the evenings. A couple of men have shown interest in the work by getting involved in the process of weaving, procuring raw material and helping the women add finishing touches.

The gender workshop was a success, broadening the scope of activities open to women artisans. Men who were initially uncomfortable about their wives travelling outside the village have now gained an understanding of why that is necessary for the women to do their crafts and develop their skills. The women have been empowered. These otherwise shy and quiet women artisans have new-found confidence and are open to innovation, trying new designs, learning new skills and networking with others weavers to promote their products. We look forward to them becoming independent, confident artisans and sharing their skills with the world.



# ATAU Continues to Connect Artisans Worldwide





This fall, students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute--Vanshaj Chowdhary, Mackenzie Banker, Yang Xu and Michael Prindle--have been busy enhancing ATA's new e-platform [Aid To Artisan U \(ATAU\)](#) that provides a networking and resource platform for anyone interested in the craft sector. By joining ATAU, people can have discussions with artisans and entrepreneurs worldwide and learn and develop their businesses by taking its online free courses. The latest activity of our interns was uploading an online catalogue for ATAU members to showcase their products. This catalog is a valuable tool for entrepreneurs and buyers to connect and form mutually beneficial linkages.

"During our time here, we had the opportunity to meet with many interesting people. Going into this project, I did not expect to talk to so many people from all over the world. Interviewing people from different countries provided us with a better understanding of the craft sector and how we can make ATAU more beneficial for them" says Mackenzie Banker.

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 Creative Monitoring and Evaluating  
 Manage a Business

 Delivering Presentations  
 Presentation

 MRP Class of 2014  
 28 members

 MRP Class of 2013  
 27 members

 Imports and Exports  
 Exports

 Technical Information  
 Others


## Market Readiness Program™



The Market Readiness Program™ (MRP) is a unique hands-on training program for all those associated with the artisan sector, held annually at NY Now. This online course module, covering a portion of the overall training material, is an introduction to the MRP program which provides intensive preparation for entry into the US market and vital information for building successful export businesses.

ATAU provides online training courses for artisans and artisan-entrepreneurs. Through a variety of free classes, artisans can enhance their skills and track their progress. The Market Readiness Program introductory course is one of the most popular classes that help identify characters of the US Retail market, and the importance of the roles of the buyer.

“Even with just the minor changes we made to the platform, we noticed a large spike in users. When all the features we recommended like the advanced search and the discussion forum get implemented, we expect there to be a large increase in both membership and activity on the site. In the future, we hope the site becomes the go-to place for artisans, buyers, or anyone interested in learning about the craft sector” says Vanshaj Chowdhary. Gilbert Kubwimana from Rwanda is very happy about this feature and seeing how people are blogging about their business brought ATAU platform. “With the increase in user base, this platform will be a big part of helping global business” reckons Kuwimana.

# ATA Holiday Crafts Sale Spreads Good Cheer





ATA's annual fourth holiday craft sale had DC, Maryland and Northern Virginia residents pouring in to appreciate and purchase precious handmade gifts--labors of love from artisans worldwide. Bright-colored Kilims from Egypt, hand pounded metal and leather purses from Tibet, scarves from Jordan, handmade traditional jewelry and tableware from Tanzania and Kenya, gorgeous hand embroidered cushion covers and handbags from Guatemala, tunic dresses, stoles and recycled textile tote bags from India were the highlights that adorned the ATA office show rooms.

Not only was this a visual treat for visitors to have access to handmade products from around the world but also a great way to get immersed in global cultural and learn from stories behind the creations.



Soheir Ghali Co-Founder, [Dokkan Crafts](#), a second time participant at the holiday crafts sale was excited to meet and talk about Egyptian crafts to guests and patrons of handmade products. "The part I like the most is to talk about Egyptian handmade and the story behind each product. Ghali further added "ATA Holiday Crafts Sale is my window to introduce and talk about Egyptian handmade products to the US customers as I don't think it is well represented in VA or DC areas".

With the confluence of artisans from over 12 countries, we at ATA are very proud and honored to share these crafts artisans make with a sincere spirit and passion to share their skills and cultural heritage. We appreciate your continued support toward promoting artisans and preserving their skills and look forward to seeing you at the next craft sale

As always, all profits from the sales go directly to help artisans.





In light of the devastating damage from Hurricane Matthew  
please support our artisans and partners in Haiti by  
[donating here](#)

**Aid to Artisans**



A Christmas tree is the background, decorated with various ornaments including red and white striped spheres, blue and green spheres, and a small giraffe. A small brown doll with a yellow and black polka-dot headscarf and a yellow and red patterned dress hangs from a string on the left. The text is overlaid in the center in a bright yellow font.

**ATA Wishes You Happy Holidays  
&  
A Wonderful Year Ahead**