



Aid to Artisans

March 2016

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***A Success
Story from
the Field:
Haitian
Artisans
Give Back
to Their
Community***



Aid to Artisans is proudly working in Haiti as part of a three-year project funded by the [UK's Big Lottery Fund](#). "Champion for Change" aims to improve the lives of people living with HIV (PLHIVs) by generating sustainable income to support their families through handmade crafts. In partnership with the [International HIV/AIDS Alliance \(IHAA\) UK](#) and the Haitian organization Promoteurs d'Objectif Zerosida (POZ), ATA implemented several product development and capacity-building workshops in order to revitalize the production of bamboo jewelry for 420 PLHIVs from nine Northern communities of Haiti in Cap Haitien, including Limbe, Limonade, and Milot. These initiatives gave birth to a new association, Bambou Chic (bamboo in French), composed of 10 dedicated trainee graduates who are training more people living with HIV to produce bamboo jewelry. Under ATA's program, Bambou Chic's artisans have sold over 1000 bangles to local and international buyers.



Coeurcius Etienne, Manager and Master Trainer for shaping and sanding the bangles

Coeurcius Etienne, Manager and Master Trainer for shaping and sanding the bangles says:

"I think everyone should be at some point involved in every level of the organization in order to get an extended knowledge of it and to better choose what they want to do. I would like to see our organization growing, teaching people and making magic. I would also like it to expand its work across Haiti and in other countries. We are happy and fulfilled by working with bamboo. Art has always been something I wanted to do. And now I have the opportunity to make art for a living. As a Haitian, I also wanted to make something with my hands. This organization combines both, and helps me taking care of myself, my family, and my country."



Skinnies Bangle



Flat Bangles



Anouse Guerrier - Assistant Manager

Anouse Guerrier, Assistant Manager and Master Trainer for designing the bamboo explains that she and her colleagues have trained more than 54 individuals leaving with HIV and have designed new flat and skinny bangles. She says: "I became very familiar with my work. Teaching about bamboo has exposed something new about me. This craft has become a highlight of my life and at the same time it is changing it and giving me hope."



Brutus Teline - Art Director and Master Trainer for painting the bamboo.

“Painting is a great science, it is an expression of the heart, a testimony of a real soul, it is an action of human senses”, says Brutus Teline – Art Director and Master Trainer for painting the bamboo.



Coeurcius Etienne demonstrates shaping the bamboo

Coeurcius Etienne, also told us that “[he] would like [their] company to cover all over Haiti and other countries.” Before accomplishing these amazing ambitions, Bambou Chic will first do its wonders in Haiti, where the project is set to conclude on September 30, 2016. By that time, Bambou Chic hopes to legally register their company and to succeed in becoming a sustainable source of economic growth for people living with HIV in Cap Haitien.

“Being a part of changing people’s lives is the greatest thing on earth. Therefore, let’s smile to one another and proclaim God’s Salvation through our action! Thanks to everyone who is helping us to make it happen.” says the Bambou Chic Team.





An Inside Story With Songa Designs International: Gilbert's Take On the MRP



With the 2016 MRP in sight, ATA is gathering testimonies from MRP alumni to highlight all the achievements of the graduates and bring the benefit of their experience and insights to this year's participants. This month, ATA features the testimony of MRP alumnus Gilbert Kubwimana, Country Director of [Songa Designs International](#), an organization that empowers women in Rwanda to create captivating, handmade designs:





ATA: *What pushed you to attend the MRP?*

Gilbert: I needed ATA to assess my products and company during the training, and to create my market plan to be able to define the target market for our products. In sum, to know how the international market works and how it is!

ATA: *What part of the MRP agenda was most useful for your work?*

Gilbert: The “structure of the US retail market”, the “planning for production and quality control”, and the “global opportunity and trends for handmade products” were all great and very useful, hands-on resources for our organization.



ATA: *What impact has had your MRP experience on your organization?*

Gilbert: After the MRP, I was able to connect with West Elm to negotiate about supplying them with baskets. We are very hopeful that we will soon conclude this deal, as discussions are going great.



ATA: *Did the MRP change in any way how you work?*

Gilbert: Yes it had changed the way I worked because it gives us great ideas on how to expand our product line. We used to offer only jewelry, and we now have banana, raffia and sisal baskets.



ATA: *In what ways, after you attended the MRP, do you continue to benefit from it?*

Gilbert: We are still benefiting of the MRP in many different ways. New markets and connections opened to us, and we can now share and exchange experiences and ideas with some of the MRP alumni via a Facebook page. We also gained recognition from our country's Ministry of Trade, which knows of the MRP and its advantages.

ATA: *What in the MRP experience was most significant for you?*

Gilbert: Meeting with potential buyers and visiting stores such as Anthropology and ABC Store was an amazing opportunity to get a practical, and not only theoretical, knowledge of the American market and its requirements.

ATA: *What kind of networking opportunities did the MRP provide for you?*

Gilbert: In addition to the MRP alumni network, which is of great help in many ways, we are now communicating with [West Elm](#) and working with [Invisible Borders](#).





ATA: *Why would you encourage other artisan organizations to participate in the MRP?*

Gilbert: The MRP is a very nice program that helps artisans to meet with potential buyers, enables them to show their products to the world and to build a network with other artisans because if you do your business alone you can't grow it. The MRP, through teaching and workshops, helped us to understand more our own business, products and partners.

ATA: *As an MRP alumnus, do you have recommendations for future participants?*

Gilbert: Yes! To follow carefully ATA's advices and guidance, and to share their thoughts and ideas with other participants, because they can learn from each other. I would also advise them to follow up with the other artisan organizations after the MRP so they don't miss the opportunity of building a network that can be very useful and reliable.

What's Coming Up



[Click here to see the Video](#)

Join us this August for the 2016 MRP. This program is a unique hands-on training experience for all those associated with the artisan sector. The program provides intensive preparation for entry into the US market and vital information for building successful export businesses.

Apply [here](#) or [aquí](#)



Thank You

To help support the many ATA programs,
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