



Aid to Artisans

May 2016

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ATA launches “Coaching and Assistance for Sustainable Entrepreneurship (CASE)” in Chiapas





San Cristobal de Las Casas, Mexico. – On May 1, 2016, Creative Learning – Aid to Artisans (CL-ATA) launched “Coaching and Assistance for Sustainable Entrepreneurship (CASE)” for textile artisans in remote municipalities of Los Altos de Chiapas. This new two-year project is focused on strengthening business skills, developing new designs and linking Mayan women weavers and embroiderers to profitable markets. CASE will continue the work begun in the three-year “Modernization for Mayan Women Weavers of Chiapas (MATCH)”, with the goal of independence and sustainability for the women and their artisan businesses.

The project is funded by a \$394,070 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Michigan.

“This new project responds directly to the region’s persistent poverty and its deeply rooted gender issues which further complicate family well-being, food security, family health and education of children” said Monika Steinberger, ATA Director of Program Management and Development. “We designed this initiative in a holistic manner, by making gender based awareness and examination of cultural restraints an integral part of artisan development”.



"Our efforts will focus on artisan groups most in need of design development, business skills and markets" notes Maria-Eugenio Piñeda Melendez, Director of ATA Mexico. "At the launch of MATCH we categorized our beneficiaries according to their skill levels and succeeded in linking the most advanced groups to the most important Mexican and international buyers. Today, these groups continue to innovate their products and expand their businesses into greater markets". She adds "CASE will serve the artisans who started at a lower skill level and need more support. This is their time".

Guillermo Macías Acosta, ATA CASE Project Manager in Chiapas, is very excited about this new opportunity for the women weavers and embroiderers. "We have completed our CASE implementation plan and are ready to organize our first trainings" he states. "Our working method will be somewhat different from what we did during MATCH. As the groups to be reached by CASE are still at lower skill levels and are located in the most remote of the municipalities targeted by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation - some of them with no internet or cell phone signal - our approach has to be very grass roots and person to person". He adds, "our local ATA CASE project team members have the experience, the industry contacts and strong relationships in the communities. They are the best at what they do and are eager to help the artisans to profitable work, greater income and a better life".





The specific objectives of CASE are:

Economic inclusion: business training and coaching sessions, new design trainings, and sewing and finishing workshops for artisans at moderate skill levels. Artisans will participate in Mexican trade fairs and local selling events, and their products will be represented at international trade fairs.

Capacity Building: Selected artisan leaders will master business finance skills, inventory management, raw materials purchasing, and quality control, and linkage to a Microfinance Institution. Promotion and branding: new, high quality products created through CASE will carry the new Kip Tik (Our Strength) brand. Transcending cultural restraints: Women artisans and male community members will participate in gender based training events. Women will begin to take greater responsibilities and are prepared to grow their artisan businesses on their own initiative, beyond the duration of CASE.



About the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (GENERAL FOUNDATION INFORMATION) The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), founded in 1930 as an independent, private foundation by breakfast cereal pioneer, Will Keith Kellogg, is among the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive, WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work and life. The Kellogg Foundation is based in Battle Creek, Michigan, and works throughout the United States and internationally, as well as with sovereign tribes. Special emphasis is paid to priority places where there are high concentrations of poverty and where children face significant barriers to success. WKKF priority places in the U.S. are in Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico and New Orleans; and internationally, are in Mexico and Haiti. For more information, visit www.wkkf.org.

Inside Story: Child's Cup Full's Impact in the West Bank



Aid to Artisans had the chance to speak with Cayle Pater, a 2015 MRP alumnus and assistant director of [Child's Cup Full](#) (CCF), about her recent trip to the West Bank where CCF is doing amazing work with the local artisans.



ATA: First, for our readers that don't know Child's Cup Full, can you tell us about it, the history of the organization, the products, the artisans you work with etc.?

Cayley: : [Child's Cup Full](#) (CCF) is a non-profit social enterprise with a mission to create job opportunities for refugee and low-income women artisans in the West Bank, and create beautifully handcrafted products for its two brands: Child's Cup Full educational children's toys, and [Darzah](#) Palestinian embroidered shoes, accessories and home décor products. The organization has a unique history. Child's Cup Full was founded in 2008 by Dr. Janette Habashi, a university professor, who started CCF as a fundraising initiative to support

education programs for refugee children in the Jenin camp, in the northern West Bank. After a few years buying educational materials for afterschool programs, she launched in 2012 the CCF artisan center, in order to create training and job opportunities for refugee and low-income mothers in the Jenin region – and thus create longer-term solutions. CCF currently employs 6 talented women full-time at the artisan center. Between 2012 and 2014, Dr. Habashi worked with her volunteer students to sell the products in the US and internationally. In 2014, I joined Dr. Habashi to formally start building the Child's Cup Full toy brand. Since then, we've grown significantly in our retail and wholesale sales (+700% in our sales between 2014 and 15). After receiving interest in Palestinian embroidery from some clients, we decided to create the [Darzah](#) collection as a way to celebrate the beautiful art form and to diversify our product offerings. We now have two brands that are both gaining momentum in the US, and we're so excited to see them continue to grow!



ATA: Can you give me some details about the trip? (How long did you stay, what was the main purpose of the trip, etc.)

Cayley: The purpose of the trip was to help the women develop the next collection of Darzah products for the US market. We launched our first collection of shoes and jewelry two months after the MRP in the summer of 2015. We received so much useful feedback, and came to the NY NOW show with ATA January 2016 to exhibit for the first time. We received our first orders there and it was a huge learning experience for us! I took that additional feedback and developed a design workshop for the embroidery artisans to create new products that would align with colors on-trend in the US for Fall/Winter and Spring/Summer.

I thought that a month would be ample time to develop a wide variety of products, but honestly, it flew by so fast! Between starting at 7am each day with the artisans (they like to start early), and running around to work



with fabrics suppliers and identifying new leather suppliers for our handbag collection, we were able to create a solid foundation for the next line, but it's still in development as of June. We plan to have our new handbag line, pillow cushions, jewelry and shoe samples completed by mid-July in time for the August NY NOW show with Aid to Artisans.

ATA: How did the collaboration with the local organizations go?

Cayley: We have a few established artisan collectives in Ramallah, Hebron and Bethlehem who want to work with us. Right now, we are fundraising to build capacity in the West Bank by creating a consortium of artisan groups. We want to build upon existing structures, and provide these groups training and opportunity to create products for the Child's Cup Full and Darzah brands.



ATA: What does working in the West Bank look like?

Cayley: First of all, there are so many beautiful products that are made in the West Bank, including Palestinian Tatreez embroidery, but many people in the US aren't aware of their existence. Limited access to the global marketplace is the big barrier for most artisans. Working in the West Bank has its challenges for various reasons, but we are lucky to have a fiercely dedicated team. We are constantly dealing with rather limited options in terms of materials to work with, from natural fabric to high quality jewelry findings, simply because the resources aren't there. Many products are imported rather than locally produced. Despite these challenges, we are working hard to identify businesses that manufacture locally, such as our new family-run leather manufacturer in Hebron.

ATA: Can you tell me a little about the things you learned during the MRP and while exhibiting during NY NOW?

Cayley: We learned so much! In January, we had samples of both our Child's Cup Full and Darzah products, which I think was challenging because it was hard for people to get a strong sense of our product offerings and the brands. That's why we've decided to expand the Darzah collection, incorporate a variety of neutral and more "statement" color ways, and to bring only Darzah products back to NY NOW. We are hoping that our new display with only Darzah products will make an even bigger impact, and that people can see how the beautiful Palestinian embroidery can be incorporated into so many different types of products.



ATA: Did you apply these skills to your work with the artisans in the West Bank? If so, in what ways?

Cayley: Absolutely. When we are working on product development, I am always sharing images and color combinations that are trending in the US. I also make sure to explain the reasoning for having various color options for different products, so that the artisans are learning with us as we develop the collection further.

ATA: What are the products you were working on while you were there?

Cayley: For the Darzah line, we worked improving a few existing products, and developing brand new products:

- 1) We identify a great shoemaker who is able to source leather soles for our shoes and has a great eye for design which improves the product development process.
- 2) We designed new bracelets, building on the technique we were using already, but creating a more casual design option.
- 3) We have selected the best leather options for our new handbags while visiting a leather manufacturer who produces a variety of leathers in all colors.
- 4) By changing the placement of the embroidery in pillows and incorporating different design decisions we were able to significantly bring the prices down for these items.



ATA: What was the highlight/key moment of your trip?

Cayley: One thing I keep telling people about the trip is that I feel like Palestinian people are one, the most hospitable people I've ever met, and two, the most resilient and hard-working people I've every worked with. This only reinforced my faith in the work we're doing and that these women can, and will, make anything happen when an opportunity presents itself.

ATA: Can you tell me a little bit about what's next for Child's Cup Full (projects, new product development, new steps, etc.)?

Cayley: Once we finish the next Darzah collection in mid-July, our biggest priority is our marketing strategy and building our wholesale and retail business for both Child's Cup Full and Darzah. We warehouse all of our products in North Carolina, which makes it easier to sell online and to retailers across the US. In August, we plan to redesign the Darzah website and to focus on SEO marketing and promoting our products online through bloggers for both brands.

With our current capacity, we don't have the opportunity to create new products for each season, but we will of course introduce new colors for the Spring/Summer 2017 Darzah line.



Artisan Spotlight: Meet our Artisan Groups in Puebla, Mexico



This past January, Aid to Artisans was thrilled to inaugurate its new booth Idea+Materia at NY NOW, showcasing products from Puebla, Mexico. ATA is pleased to continue exhibiting the captivating handcrafted products of over 20 artisan communities from Puebla at the August NY NOW. Please read more below about these groups:

Acatlan de Osorio's Group:

This team is composed of two groups from the municipality of Acatlan de Osorio. They specialize in home décor such as ceramic accessories, planters, flowerpots, and decoration for exterior and interiors. Generation after generation, local people of these regions have traditionally made "Arboles de la vida" (trees of life) and small containers/objects in burnished clay. Today with new developed designs, this group aims to reach new markets, while still holding on to their traditional techniques and cultural heritage.

Artesanos y Artesanas Alfareros Popolocas de los Reyes Metzontla A.C.'s Gropu:

This group is located in the village of Los Reyes Metzontla in the state of Puebla, Mexico and they specialize in home décor such as ceramic accessories, planters, flowerpots, and decoration for exterior and interiors. The group focuses on traditional burnished techniques, and is known for their amazing wide range of vases, pitchers and plates.



Izucar de Matamoros' Group:

These artisans craft ceramic home décor accessories such as planters, flowerpots, and decoration for exterior and interiors. The main characteristic of this group is their artisanal technique, which uses pre-Hispanic iconography made by hand-painted, colorful and detailed motives for each piece. They usually make "Arboles de la vida" (trees of life), decorative skulls and vases. The group introduces new designs that include planters, votive candles, and the characteristic hand painted motives with different composition and color palettes.



Emilio Carranza's Group:

This team is composed of various groups in the locality of Emilio Carranza in the state of Puebla, Mexico. Their notarial artisanal technique consists of hand-painted motives with glazed finishing. They specialize in making cookware and different kind of plates and pots. This summer, the group introduces new designs for their glazed and hand-painted products, revealing different composition and color palettes. Each group has its own characteristic patterns and shapes.



Xochitlan de todos los Santos' Group:

Xochitlan, which in the Olmeca language means in-between the flowers, is the root of inspiration for this group's beautiful embroidery designs and textiles. Xochitlan de todos los Santos' Group specializes in textiles and in pulled thread and embroidery techniques. After the introduction of ATA's design workshops, this group went from focusing only on shawls and tablecloths to a wide range of products including clothing and more home décor products.



Cuetzalan del Progreso's Group:

This group – another one from the town of Cuetzalan del Progreso - uses embroidery and backstrap loom to create home décor and clothing such as pillow covers, table runners, placemats, blouses and shawls.



Huauchinango / Pantepec / Zacatlan de las Manzanas's groups:

Artisans from these municipalities specialize in embroidery called “pepenado,” which figures are made by lineal stitches across the fabric. That is how they create their blouses with embroidery, as well now as pillow cases and dresses.



Hueyapan

The artisans of Hueyapan use the ancestral natural dying tradition of their municipality to make woolen clothes with beautiful and unique geometric embroidery. Their craft ponchos, capes, shawls and belts. All are embroidered with the characteristic patterns in natural dyed wool thread.



Pahuatlán's group

This group, composed of artisans from 9 different villages, specializes in textiles and embroidery to make pillow cases, table runners, placemats, blouses and shawls. Each village uses their own artisanal technique, whether it is embroidery with beads, cross stitch or otomi. Their expanded their products' line to include woolen ponchos, capes and belts.



San Salvador el Seco's group

The artisans of San Salvador El Seco use volcanic stone to craft various accessories and decoration, including sculptures and plant pots, all with very modern shapes and looks. They also produce stonework utilitarian accessories.



Zacatlán de las Manzanas' group

This group located in the municipality of Zacatlán de las Manzanas, uses their wood carving talent to create beautiful pieces such as wood toys, picture frames, home accessories (including wooden jewelry boxes), as well as regular carpentry (including doors and furniture).



Tecali de Herrera's group

This group from Tecali de Herrera also carves onyx and marble to create home and office décor, sculptures, vessels, candle votives or plant pots, which always combine their traditional techniques with modern and contemporary designs. Their unique talent allows them to work both on huge onyx or marble pieces as well as on very detailed, tiny items.



San Antonio Texcala's group

These artisans make decorative sculptures as well as home and office décor and accessories such as plant pots, candles votive, mirrors and jewelry boxes from onyx and marble that they carve. This group is composed of seven different families and workshops who all work collaboratively in this municipality and with ATA.



Pahuatlán del Valle / San Pablito's group

These artisans craft home and office décor, accessories, light-shades, iconography didactic books and gifts boxes from amate, the fiber extracted from the jonote tree. They also combine otomi embroidery to make light shades and frames.



Zacatlan de las Manzanas and San Salvador el Verde's group

This group uses ocoxal, which is the local pine needle they extract the longest fibers from to dry them until they are brown, to create placemats, decorative pieces, lightshades and baskets. They extended their products' line to include different shapes of trays, placements, lightshades and baskets that combine several materials such as copper , iron and linen threads.



Cuetzalan del Progreso's group

This group from the small town of Cuetzalan del Progreso use Jonote tree fibers to make accessories, indoor and outdoor decoration, baskets, lightshades and hanging fruiterers. Their products' structures are made out of soft wood around which they weave with the hand spooned jonote thread.



Izucar de Matamoros Fibers' group

These artisans work with natural fibers that they extract from the tule plant and weave them to create square and round baskets, containers and placemats, as well as home decoration elements. They offer baskets and containers of many different sizes, styles and shapes, which make each of them even more unique.



Zapotitlan Salinas' group

The artisans from Zapotitlan Salina weave palm leaves to create indoor and outdoor home décor as well as accessories such as bags and hats. They also make traditional weaved baskets with different patterns that they modernized by adding a moldable wire at the top, or by using double wall.



Chignahuapan's group

Following the tradition of their municipality, this group from Chignahuapan masters the art of blowing glass to make very unique products. Christmas is their strongest and busiest season of the year, as they produce beautiful Christmas decoration and decorative spheres.



Xonaca, Puebla's group

This group from Xonaca, in the Mexican region of Puebla, specializes in blown glass, especially small and very detailed sculptures. They offer a wide range of crafts, including tea spoons, decorative plan guides and votive candles.



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.

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