

Aid to Artisans

Winter 2020 Newsletter



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Cover Image: Traditional hammock weavers in Yucatan, Mexico. Photograph by Daniel Hernandez Delgadillo

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ATA Mexican Artisans Celebrate Great Sales

Artisan members of Agujas Mágicas from Tixmehuac, Yucatan had never sold their hammocks internationally when they joined the ATA “Manos Vivas” project. “We never expected the pieces we make could get to the US Market for real. When ATA first came, they told us that if we improve our crafts quality and if we innovate with new products as totes and cushions, we could have more sales and income through orders from clients in the US and all over the world.”

ATA Mexico staff and designers have been working with hundreds of artisans like Magic Needles to improve their technical and production capacity, respond to orders quickly, and improve quality control. These essential skills will ensure success when the artisans sell into the US retail market.

ATA Mexico staff designers Paola Martinez and Guillermo Jester developed a new designs for 2020 with Mimi Robinson, an ATA Senior



Artisan hammock weavers in the Yucatan



Backstrap loom techniques used in Chiapas



Traditional embroidery techniques from the Yucatan



Members of "Agujas Mágicas" begin preparing the hammock looms for new orders

Designer. Robinson has been providing product development and design expertise for many projects with us over the past four years in Mexico. Martinez spent a great deal of time in the field visiting the artisans, teaching them about proper costing and pricing and working with them to get the designs just right.

“Paola and Guillermo are part of a new wave of Mexican designers making a big impact in the international markets and in Mexico. I am so impressed by their heartfelt commitment to their artisan partners, as well as their leadership and dynamic creativity,” says Robinson.

Samples of the resulting collection featuring the traditional Mexican techniques from the Yucatan and Chiapas were exhibited at the Las Vegas Market and New York Now trade shows in January/February 2020. The collection created a flood of buyers and orders. Hammocks from the Yucatan, apparel, and pom poms were best sellers. Sales nearly tripled from the first show in August. The marketing team was thrilled to return home to share the good news with the artisans.

After a visit from the team to share the news of the successful show and new orders, Agujas Mágicas said, “Now we can see that what they said is true and we hope to have more sales and orders because with the income we can buy things for the school of our children and for ourselves. Thank you for the support and for helping us to improve our work”

“We are very grateful to Aid to Artisans for this opportunity. We have never received a request from another country before and it feels nice to know that the work we do is well received by other people. We want to



Aid to Artisans

México

ATA Marketing Manager Guillermo Jester with the new collection at the Las Vegas Market in January 2020. Photograph by Lauren Barkume

An embroiderer in the Yucatan



International Meeting on Social Solidarity Economy between Women Held in San Cristobal

On March 7 and 8, 2020, Creative Learning - Aid to Artisans (CL-ATA), along with the Secretary for Gender Equality of the Government of the State of Chiapas, the Municipality of San Cristobal, and Civil Society organizations, organized the "International Meeting of Social Solidarity Economy among Women" forum.

Over 250 women from Guatemala, Ecuador and the states of Yucatan, Campeche, Puebla, Oaxaca and Chiapas attended including business owners, representatives of civil society organizations, artisan cooperatives,

and indigenous communities. Representatives from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Trickle Up and OXFAM Mexico also participated along with other government representatives including Governor of the State of Chiapas Rutilio Escandón.

The event featured knowledge exchanges concerning social solidarity economy among women, covered good practices for social advocacy and good governance, and promoted of social networks to strengthen the livelihood of women.

continue progressing in our organization so that we can give better attention to these requests and receive many, many, many more," shared the leader of Los Mangos, a 12 member indigenous artisan group in San Juan Can Cuc in Chiapas, México.

Written by Lauren Barkume
Photographs by Daniel Hernandez Delgadillo, Lauren Barkume and ATA Mexico Staff



Over 250 women from Guatemala, Ecuador, Yucatan, and Chiapas attended the forum.



The inauguration of the event.

learned I will put into practice. This forum has truly impacted my life positively.” (Saudy Moo Ortegón, artisan beneficiary from Yucatán)



The forum coordinators: (left) María Cruz from SEIGEM, Maru Pineda from CL-ATA (middle) and Michel Dominguez from SEIGEM (right)

Photographs by ATA Mexico Staff

Three major themes were featured:

1. Self-care for women’s health
2. Resource management, and
3. Cooperation and solidarity among women in the economy

The CL-ATA Mexico team were key experts and panelists in the following booths: Savings and self-care (Elena Gómez), Market and marketing (María Eugenia Pineda), and innovation (Paola Martínez).

"We are very happy to have organized this forum, especially because the participating women learned how they can organize themselves and carry out activities that improve financial situation and their lives in general. Working with the different levels

of Government gave us the women learned lesson on how to contribute to economic development. We intend to build on that knowledge and continue working with these women and their organizations” says María Eugenia Pineda, Country Director CL-ATA Mexico.

Led by CL-ATA, the group proposed recommendations for a final presentation to Chiapas State Governor, Rutilio Escandón, who promised to follow up with actions in the coming weeks.

“Thank you so much for the invitation. I leave very happy, with new knowledge and experiences that make me grow as a person and as a group. But above all, that as women, we should value ourselves. Everything I have



The closing with the State Governor of Chiapas. Maru Pineda sitting on far right.



Entrepreneurs discuss their community assets and action plans during an ATA workshop at the Entrepreneurship Expo and Business Summit in Lesotho

Millennium Challenge Corporation funds a new Research Partnership for Lesotho led by CL-ATA

On October 1, 2019, Creative Learning – Aid to Artisans launched started an initiative in Lesotho as part of a partnership with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) focused on women’s economic empowerment. The one-year research project, entitled “The Value Chain Mapping for Key Products in Lesotho’s Creative Industries,” is designed to obtain a thorough understanding of the mohair and basketry artisan value chain in Lesotho. The project will produce a public report detailing a roadmap to turn this artisan sector into a viable industry. The research will be carried out using interviews, focus groups, benchmarking of the craft sectors of neighboring countries, historical perspective and recommendations of best practices for the future.



hand spun and dyed mohair at Leribe Craft Centre

In November, ATA hired a Lesotho-based team of three including Project Coordinator Mantai Mpesi, who is an ATA MRP graduate and leader of “Handmade in Lesotho” craft export business. Selloane Tseka and Refiloe Damane were also hired as Research Assistants to conduct interviews with local mohair and basketry artisans.

ATA staff Monika Steinberger and Rachel Landale traveled to Lesotho in November to launch the project, train the local team and begin the research. Eighteen levels of the artisan value chain were identified and interview tools for each actor were created and refined.

The research will be coordinated in partnership with the Lesotho Millennium Development Association (LMDA) and MCC, complimenting four organizations who are also investigating other sectors of Lesotho in partnership with MCC. They include:

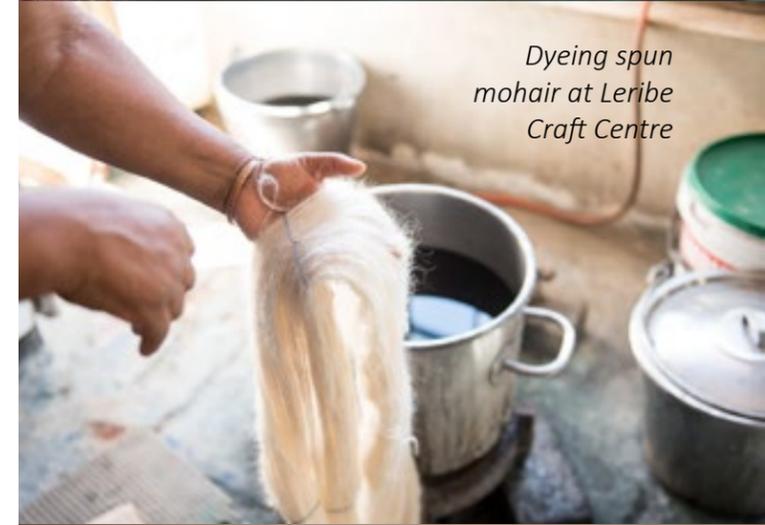
- Creative Learning
- ICRW – International Center for Research on Women
- IPA- Innovations for Poverty Action
- A local consortium of Caritas, 4D Climate Solutions and Care for Basotho

The trip laid the groundwork for a coordinated research initiative between the four international organizations, ministries of the Lesotho government, universities, local industry associations and Basotho business executives.

We met with the Lesotho ministries of SME development and marketing, of trade, of culture and tourism, and of taxation and customs. The team also met with the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation, the



Raw mohair



Dyeing spun mohair at Leribe Craft Centre



Weaving mohair rugs at Maseru Tapestries and Mats



Leribe Craft Centre



Weaving a Basotho basket

Lesotho Business Development Corporation and the Wool and Mohair Development Promotion Project.

While in Lesotho, ATA ran an asset mapping and action planning workshop at the Entrepreneurship Expo and Business Summit for around 50 small business manufacturers. The workshop was well received and the participants used the tools we taught to identify and the human, social, natural, physical and financial assets they have both individually and in their networks. Individuals identified goals they could reach using only these existing assets and networks and put

together action plans to advance towards their goals.

The value chain research will conclude in September 2020 and produce a realistic description of the Lesotho craft sector, with its strengths, weaknesses and bottlenecks, creating a solid basis for funding and investment decisions in the future. .

The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) nor that of the U.S. Government. Photographs by Lauren Barkume, Rachel Landale and Justice Kalebe



Members of Likila during an ATA organizational workshop



Lesotho mountains outside Teyateyaneng

A member of the Likila basket and hat weaving association in rural Butha Buthe

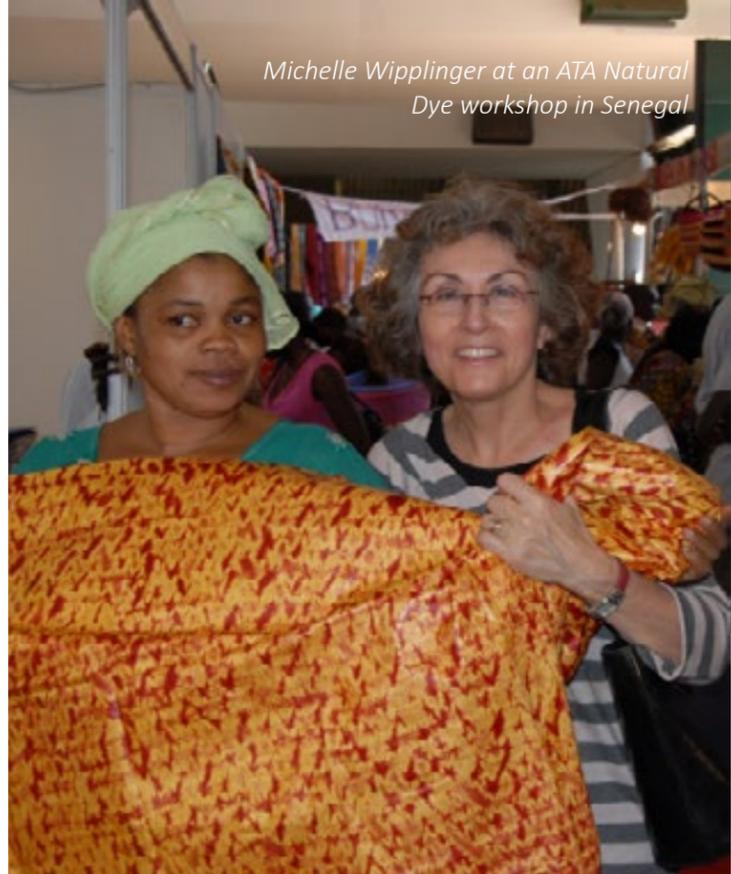
Remembering Michele Wipplinger

(April 11, 1947 – February 15, 2020)

“The dyes touch many hands, they help agriculture, artisans, they boost the local economy. The craft market is burgeoning and everybody wants natural dyes.”

- Michele Wipplinger

Michele Wipplinger was respected and admired for her enduring commitment to Aid to Artisans and the global artisan sector. Founder of Earthues, Michele was an international color specialist and textile designer and ecologist with recognized expertise in sustainable plant dye processes. She worked with indigenous artisans supporting the continuation of their vital



Michelle Wipplinger at an ATA Natural Dye workshop in Senegal



2019 MRP Alumni visit ABC Carpet and Home in New York during the Market Readiness Program

What's Next!

Summer 2020 @ Las Vegas Market

Market Readiness Program
Aug 8-12 2020

["Training Entrepreneurs in Artisan Markets" \(TEAM\)](#) session in partnership with the Las Vegas Market! Serving companies looking to enter the US retail market, TEAM combines one-on-one counseling and training and a booth at the fastest growing trade show in the US. We also provide industry experts to coach TEAM participants during the show.

The July 2020 TEAM booth will feature prominently in the entrance of the Handmade section of the Las Vegas Market new permanent building. Read more about our TEAM by following this link. A couple spots are still available for [July 2020 TEAM, apply today.](#)

What are our alumni saying?

"The help provided by the team is invaluable due to the experience of each of the people who support the follow-up until they reach the fair"- Carlos Rendón of Azure Jewelry

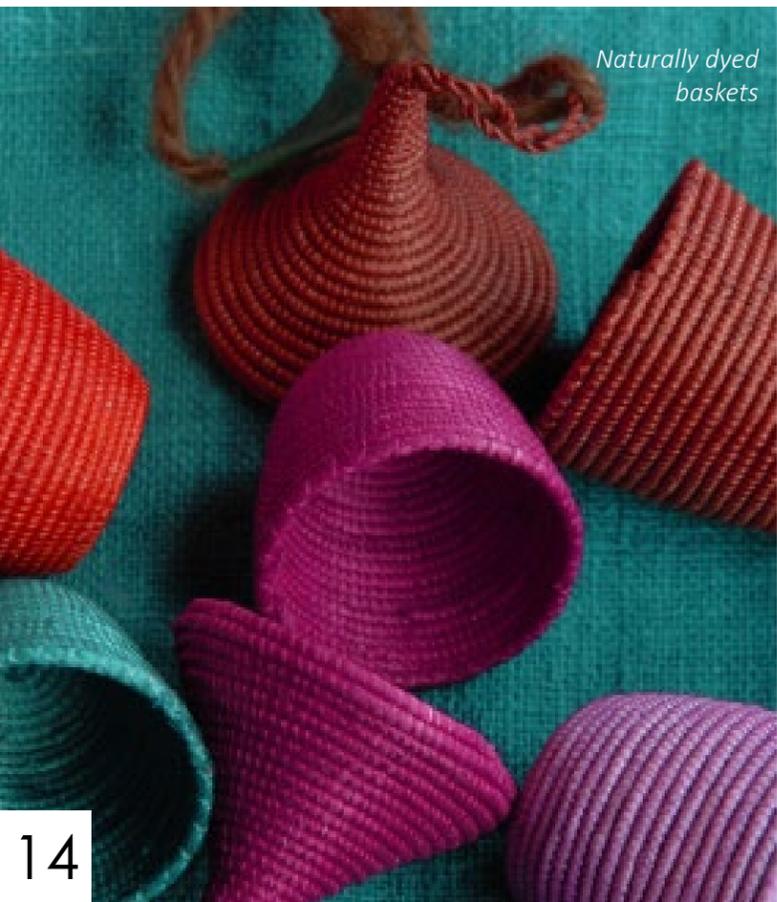
ATA's signature [Market Readiness Program™](#) (MRP) is an immersive training for artisan sector businesses seeking to export into the U.S. market. The four-and-a-half-day workshop is held at NY NOW ©, the largest Home and Lifestyle tradeshow in the US. Since 1993, the MRP has trained hundreds of women and men from more than 45 countries.

The MRP is designed for artisan business owners, exporters, designers, entrepreneurs, and members of supporting agencies, looking to enter the U.S. wholesale and retail market for handmade gifts, home décor, and fashion accessories.

ATA is offering free MRP info webinars on [March 23rd](#) and [April 8th](#) to learn more about the program and answer your questions. Sign up for a webinar following the links above.

traditions while creating marketable skills for the international artisan craft sector. Among her many accomplishments with Aid to Artisans, a few could be noted including conducting several natural dye and mentoring workshop in West Africa, developing color and trend reports for ATA's Market Readiness Programs in New York and India, training artisans in product development and designs for natural cotton woven products, and many other.

Her profound enthusiasm and dedication over the last 40 years merited her with a reputation as the natural dye expert for the artisan sector. Michele was not only an author, educator, photographer and master dyer and designer, she was also held in the highest esteem and regard by the artisans, designers, funders, colleagues and friends. The entire Aid to Artisans family will surely miss her and wishes her family their heartfelt condolences.



Naturally dyed baskets

Aid to Artisans

Artisans around the world need your support!

Please make a donation by clicking [here](#).



Creative
Learning

