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TURQUOISE MOUNTAIN

## “BUILDING LIVELIHOODS AND TRADE” PROJECT FINAL REPORT

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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With the support of USAID, Turquoise Mountain has transformed the neighborhood of Murad Khani, in the old city of Kabul, from a neglected slum into a thriving historical quarter, creating skills, jobs and a sense of pride for Afghans. In collaboration with a wide group of public and private funders, USAID has been Turquoise Mountain's principal public supporter throughout the life of the project. Without the long-term commitment and vision of USAID, the outstanding results of this project would not have been possible. USAID's longstanding support for the project is testament to an imaginative and innovative approach to development, especially in the Afghan context, where it has been shown that commitment, flexibility and creativity are central to achieving results.

The USAID-funded Building Livelihoods and Trade (BLT) project covered four components: (1) urban regeneration, (2) community development, (3) education, and (4) business development. Components 1, 2 and 4 were completed between 2008 and 2011, during the first three years of the program. They are the subject of a final report, submitted in January 2012 (attached with this report for reference). Here we briefly re-state the principal results of those three components, before moving to a consideration of component 3, education, which continued from 2008 to 2015.

### **Component 1 – Urban Regeneration**

The Urban regeneration program aims to conserve the traditional architecture and built environment of Murad Khani; and to train a local labor force in the techniques required for the preservation and maintenance of such buildings.

- 112 historic and community buildings rebuilt, repaired or constructed in the Murad Khani neighborhood of the old city of Kabul;
- 30,000m<sup>3</sup> of rubbish cleared from the streets;
- The Institute for Afghan Arts and Architecture moved into fully restored and purpose-built buildings in Murad Khani, in 2011;
- Provision of water, electricity, sanitation and stone paving throughout the neighborhood, benefitting some 570 residents, as well as students and traders.
- Over 1,100 semi-skilled laborers received employment and training in the course of this restoration work.
- As noted by an independent USAID-commissioned evaluation, conducted in summer 2015, Turquoise Mountain “transformed Murad Khani from a wasteland into an historical treasure.”
- UNESCO awarded Turquoise Mountain with a 2013 Asia-Pacific Award of Distinction for the restoration of one of the central Murad Khani buildings, the Great Serai, a nineteenth century merchant's palace, which now serves as part of the Turquoise Mountain Institute.
- With the help of USAID funding, the completed activities have provided an improved living environment for residents and an attractive and useful site for visitors, creating jobs, increasing traffic and investment in the area, and securing Murad Khani as a symbol of pride for Afghans.

Murad Khani is now the last remaining intact neighborhood in the old city of Kabul, after decades of war, and a most recent decade of modern development. For generations of Afghans and visitors to come, USAID has preserved this last piece of historic Kabul.

## **Component 2 – Community Development**

The Community Development program aims to provide basic education and healthcare to the community of Murad Khani; and to strengthen relations with the Murad Khani community.

- In 2007 Turquoise Mountain established the Murad Khani Primary School. To date the school has educated 338 children from the community. The school was handed over to the government in 2011.
- In 2007 Turquoise Mountain established the Ferozkoh Family Health Clinic (FFHC). To date the clinic has received 63,000 patient visits, serving primarily women and children. It is a model family health and primary care center in Kabul, in its care, community outreach and partial income recovery structure.
- Turquoise Mountain has conducted other community education projects, such as women’s literacy classes, benefitting 50 women who had no other opportunity for classes.
- Community outreach projects, such as women’s tailoring classes, have also been carried out regularly.
- Community events, such as the annual Nawruz celebration, are held, in order to foster a sense of community spirit.

## **Component 4 – Business Development**

The Business Development program aims to increase demand for Afghan products domestically and internationally; to create an economic incentive for Afghanistan to revive and maintain its traditional arts and crafts industry; to improve market access for artisans; and to create jobs and livelihoods through increased sales of Afghan craft products.

- To date some US\$3.5 million of international sales have been brokered on behalf of Afghan artisan businesses;
- Prestigious commissions have been secured for Afghan artisans, such as woodwork for a suite in the five-star Connaught Hotel in London, and calligraphy and ceramics for the five-star Anjum Hotel in Mecca.
- Turquoise Mountain has curated and led major international exhibitions of Afghan art and crafts, from the Venice Biennale to the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha in 2013. A forthcoming exhibition at the Freer|Sackler Galleries of the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C., will be the largest ever held to date. Such exhibitions contribute to raising the profile of Afghan crafts and winning new commissions.
- Durable international relationships have been established between Afghan craft producers and international retailers and designers, such as Pippa Small, an ethical jewelry designer based in London; Kate Spade on New York’s Fifth Avenue; Monsoon-Accessorize, a UK high-street retailer; and museum shops belonging to the British Museum, the Smithsonian, and Chicago’s Oriental Institute.
- To date Turquoise Mountain has supported a total of 29 independent Afghan businesses to improve the quality and design of their products and export to international markets.

Following the conclusion of USAID’s support for these three components in 2011, Turquoise Mountain continued its partnership with USAID, in support of the National Institute for Afghan Arts and Architecture, a vocational training institute, which was moved to its current location in the old city in January 2011. As the Institute approaches its fifth anniversary of independent existence in its current location, it is a welcome opportunity to review its successes and challenges in this report.

### Key achievements of Component 3 – Education

321 (246 male, 75 female) students, 30 per cent of whom are female, have received or are receiving education in the Schools of Woodwork, Ceramics, Calligraphy & Miniature Painting, and Jewelry & Gem-Cutting.

- Of 187 graduates (48 female, 139 male) from TMI in the period from 2009 to 2015, 80 per cent are in craft-related employment or further study.
- Enriched students' skills through additional classes in IT, art history, graphic design, geometric design, business, Sharia law, and English, Dari and Pashto languages.
- Full City & Guilds accreditation for the Schools' curricula was granted, as well as Afghan Ministry of Education accreditation and registration. Upon graduation, students join a community of over 1.5 million certified City & Guilds artisans worldwide, allowing them to work or continue their studies abroad. The Institute is the only internationally-accredited vocational training institution of its type, not only in Afghanistan, but in the whole of Central Asia.



Woodwork school students during work

- In 2011 the Institute was registered as an independent Afghan entity with the Ministry of Economy, and was fully transferred to Afghan management.
- The Institute was named the best arts vocational training institution in Afghanistan in 2013 by the Afghan government.
- Supported the establishment of 15 new businesses for Turquoise Mountain Institute graduates in the Murad Khani complex.
- Provided cooperative workspace and machineries for Institute graduates in Murad Khani.
- An endowment fund has been raised from private philanthropy which will ensure the continued success of the Institute for ten years beyond the support of USAID.

The Institute has become what Turquoise Mountain hoped for, and much more. It was created to



Ceramics department students display their work.

train the next generation of master artisans, to ensure that these traditions remain a part of Afghanistan's culture and economy into the future. It has done that through the training of hundreds of young masters and the documentation and transmission of traditional skills. But the Institute has not only preserved the traditions; it has brought back lost skills and quality, and it has created entrepreneurs. It has created 51 business owners and partners who now form the foundation of the industry's future growth and contribution to the Afghan economy. And the products created by those

businesses today rival the quality of any producer around the world, laying the foundations for a new Afghan brand led by high quality traditional crafts.

## 1. BACKGROUND

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The Turquoise Mountain Trust (TMT) is one of the Prince's Charities: a non-profit, non-governmental organization specializing in urban regeneration, business development, and education in traditional arts and architecture, that seeks to provide jobs, skills, and a renewed sense of national pride to men and women.

In November 2008, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) established a \$6,099,465 cooperative agreement called "Building Livelihoods and Trade" with the Turquoise Mountain Trust (TMT), to support the restoration of the social, economic, and cultural value of the historic Kabul area of Murad Khani and the wider Afghan crafts industry. In September 2010 a further \$4,537,646 was added to the cooperative agreement and its timeframe extended until November 2015. The Building Livelihoods and Trade (BLT) project supports the development objectives of both USAID and the Afghan government. A goal of the US Government is to assist Afghanistan in building a stable, democratic and self-sufficient society, as per the Afghanistan Compact. Therefore, one of USAID's national objectives is to contribute towards a thriving licit economy led by the private sector. One of the key ways to achieve social and economic growth in Afghanistan is by developing the Afghan crafts industry in a swift and sustainable manner. As such, the expected impact of BLT is the revitalization of a commercial, educational and cultural area in the center of Kabul. This means growth in Afghanistan's traditional arts, crafts and architecture industries, including increased demand for Afghan products domestically and internationally; and the creation of lasting economic ties to global markets. The project has brought improved health, economic, and social conditions for poor communities, artisans, and especially women in Murad Khani.

In 2006, Turquoise Mountain began its work in Afghanistan. The Old City sat under two meters of rubbish, historic buildings were collapsing at a rate of one a week, unemployment and poverty rates were high, and education levels low. The Afghan craft industry – once a source of pride and income for hundreds of thousands of Afghans, in particular women and the rural poor – had been decimated. Craft masters were no longer producing work, and had no students to whom they could pass on their skills. And Murad Khani, the historic commercial center of Kabul's Old City, was threatened with demolition. Murad Khani was one of the poorest areas of Kabul, according to Action Contre La Faim's indicators in their 2004 Kabul vulnerability mapping.

Turquoise Mountain aimed to regenerate the Old City, and revitalize the traditional craft industry. We began in 2006 and 2007 by employing members of the community to help clear the meters of accumulated garbage with shovels and carts, and then training woodworkers and calligraphers in what would become the National Institute for Afghan Arts & Architecture.

USAID was one of Turquoise Mountain's first major public donors, and this assistance went a long way in enabling Turquoise Mountain to realize this initial vision. We cannot express how much the grant has impacted the project, in its timing, its scope, and its vision. We are so grateful for USAID's far-sighted, long-term and continued support, crucial to successful development work in Afghanistan. The project – Murad Khani, and the craft industry – would not be where it is today without it.

## **1.1. Mission Statement and Objectives**

The mission of Turquoise Mountain is to regenerate Afghanistan's traditional crafts and historic areas, by creating jobs, elevating skills, and instilling a renewed sense of national pride. The objectives of TMT are to provide ongoing education and training, thereby creating economic opportunities and improving livelihoods, and to create in the center of Kabul a symbol of Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage as a driver for the country's future prosperity. Turquoise Mountain accomplishes these objectives through the regeneration and repair of Murad Khani, a traditional commercial and craft neighborhood in the center of Kabul's Old City; the establishment and continuation of the Institute for Afghan Arts and Architecture; by providing access to the sale of Afghan crafts both domestically and abroad; providing mentorship for new businesses; linking craft producers to export markets; driving community development initiatives; and restoring, refurbishing, and rebuilding infrastructure.

The strategic objective of TMT fits with the USAID assistance objective to contribute towards a developed business climate that enables private investment, job creation and financial independence. The project highlights the investment of both the international community and the Afghan Government in the culture and craft industry of Afghanistan. TMT achieved these objectives through the four components of the USAID cooperative agreement. With the exception of the Education Component (Component 3) completed in 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2015, the other three components of the Turquoise Mountain's program stopped receiving funding from USAID in July 2011. These components are urban regeneration, community development and business development.

A final report on the three completed components was sent to USAID on January 2012 (attached for reference). Key achievements from these three components are highlighted in the executive summary above.

This final report is in addition to prior periodic reports submitted to USAID including Monthly, Quarterly and Annual Reports since 2008. This report provides broader background and context to the project, detailing the key achievements, major activities and outputs, and significant challenges encountered and actions taken. Accomplishments are analyzed in relation to the situation prior to the project and significant changes brought about by the project. Progress made from 2008 up to the closeout of the Component 3 is analyzed and reported based on the specific measurements, baselines and targets as laid out in the approved Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. Success stories under the component are likewise highlighted to point out extraordinary achievements during project implementation.

The report concludes with lessons learned by providing insights on what worked, what did not work, and what could have been done differently. This section of the report aims to inform USAID, TMT, and other stakeholders for future programming and decision-making.

## **1.2. Major Achievements:**

- 321 (246 male, 75 female) students, 30 per cent of whom were female, were educated in the Schools of Woodwork, Ceramics, Calligraphy & Painting, and Jewelry & Gem-Cutting.
- Enriched students' skills through additional classes in IT, art history, graphic design, geometric design, business, Sharia law, English, Dari and Pashto languages.

- Provided strong and consistent support for graduates of the Institute to set up their own businesses, study abroad, pursue teaching careers, or work in the craft sector.
- In 2011 the Institute was registered as an independent Afghan entity with the Ministry of Economy, and was fully transferred to Afghan management.
- The Institute completed its move to its newly restored home in Murad Khani in 2011.
- Enhanced Afghanistan’s reputation as a source of high-quality products.
- Full City & Guilds accreditation for the Schools’ curricula was granted, as well as Afghan Ministry of Education accreditation and registration. Upon graduation, students join a community of over 1.5 million certified City & Guilds artisans worldwide, allowing them to work or continue their studies abroad. The Institute is the only internationally-accredited vocational training institution of its type, not only in Afghanistan, but in the whole of Central Asia.
- The Institute was named the best arts vocational training institution in Afghanistan in 2013 by the Afghan government.
- A total of 187 students (48 female, 139 male) have graduated from TMI in the period from 2009 to 2014. Of these, 51 graduates (27 per cent) are now craft business owners or partners in a craft business, 82 (44 per cent) are in craft-related employment, and 17 (9 per cent) are pursuing further studies. Of the remainder, 33 (18 per cent) graduates are unemployed, and 4 (2 per cent) didn’t respond to the survey.
- Supported the establishment of 15 new businesses for Turquoise Mountain Institute graduates in the Murad Khani complex.
- 39 domestic and international exhibitions held in order to showcase Afghan craft products, bring them to a wider audience, and create economic opportunity for artisans.
- Provided cooperative workspace and machineries for Institute graduates in Murad Khani.
- Developed and launched the Institute Management Information System, a centralized system collecting Turquoise Mountain Institute data on students.
- Developed and launched Turquoise Mountain website and social media, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest and Vimeo.
- Provided a highly visible and symbolic center for Afghan culture and heritage, which has been featured in numerous local and international media; it has also become a major destination for visitors.



A student polishing a gemstone (L) and Institute students celebrating Turquoise Mountain’s TVET award in 2013.

- An endowment fund has been raised from private philanthropy which will ensure the continued success of the Institute for ten years beyond the support of USAID.

## 2. COMPONENT 3 (EDUCATION): PROJECT RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

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### 2.1. Summary of Achievement:

TMT's Institute for Afghan Arts and Architecture was established in 2006 to revive and restore threatened traditions, train a new generation of artisans in four crafts – Woodwork, Calligraphy & Miniature Painting, Jewelry & Gem-Cutting, and Ceramics – and to meet the demands of growing markets for such products inside and outside the country.

The Institute is led by the country's leading master artisans, with a qualified and experienced Afghan management team who maintain the high quality of activities established over the last nine years of growth. These experts teach students from Kabul and the surrounding areas in practical, traditional craft-making skills. In addition students receive supplementary classes in subjects such as business, IT, and English language.



Students' graduation ceremony at Turquoise Mountain

In 2009 the Institute finalized the formal registration process with the Ministry of Education, and with this government support, it now acts as a model for training centers throughout Afghanistan. Furthermore in 2009, formal accreditation was granted to the Institute by City & Guilds, an international vocational education awarding body, based in Britain. The Institute is Afghanistan's only institution to receive such international acknowledgement of quality, and one of only a handful in the wider region. Development of assessment procedures has been completed in line with the City & Guilds guidelines and continued teacher training will maintain that teaching is in line with City & Guild requirements.

The training programs are based on traditional apprenticeship systems of learning, used in combination with modern and internationally recognized methods of teaching. Having mastered basic technical information and skills, students develop their wider creative abilities, moving on to design sophisticated pieces inspired by historic precedents drawn from the country's traditions. This training allows graduates to respond to strong international demand in the Middle East, Europe and the United States for unique and high quality handcrafted artwork.

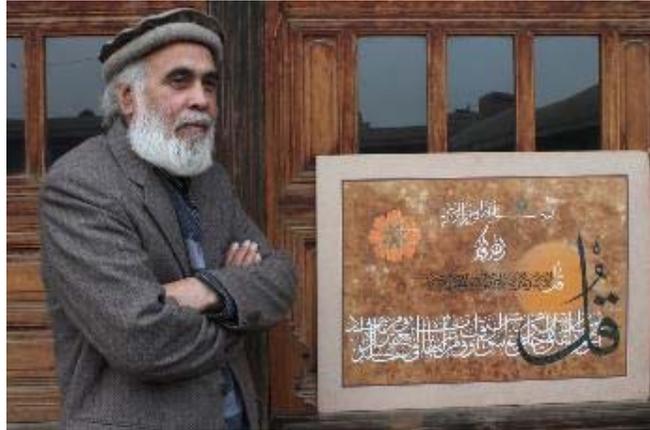
TMT is committed to developing international markets, providing opportunities for further study or teaching, and to giving information and support to those establishing independent businesses. The first class of 30 students graduated in 2009. Ensuring opportunities for graduates is a key objective of educating the students. Giving them a range of options and continued support offers viable and lasting career options on completion of their three years of study, ensuring that their time at the Institute has been a worthwhile and life changing experience. Activities and employment opportunities are focused on areas directly related to the training and education received by students during their time of study. The Institute administration oversees all activities, building external links and opportunities, and providing advice to individual students. Between 2009 and 2015 187 students

have graduated from the Institute, of whom 80 per cent are in craft-related employment or further study.

## 2.2. Component Achievements November 2008 – November 2015:

### *Curriculum review:*

- The Turquoise Mountain Institute conducts the review of the Institute current curricula every year. Reviews and revisions made of practical curriculum content, with input from existing teaching staff, the Chief Education Officer and a number of international advisors, has ensured that class content has continuously improved and responded to lacunae in skills and knowledge transferal to students. This continual process has improved the overall quality of education and builds future capacity in the commercial arts and crafts sector, thereby also ensuring livelihoods for graduating students
- In 2014, the Education Department completed a full five-year review of all current curricula. The review incorporated lessons learnt by teachers, information about market demand, and inputs from Dr. Thalia Kennedy, an international expert in art pedagogy, who was involved previously in the set-up of the Institute and its curricula. Through this process, the Institute aims to continually improve the quality of the education offered at the Institute, and respond flexibly to the shifting environment of Afghan business and the wider craft industry
- In July 2010, The Calligraphy Department, supported by national and international education advisors, worked together to develop the first “Illumination & Miniature Painting Curriculum” framework. The curriculum finds its basis in Behzad’s School of Illumination and Miniature Painting. Additions to the Miniature Painting syllabus were made in June 2012 and students have been magnifying and following the patterns of the great Herati Master Behzad. Furthermore in 2010, Dr. Omari, a senior consultant, held a three-week workshop along with 13 masters. This project also developed a five-year syllabus and curriculum review.
- From 2008 to 2015, 24 curriculum reviews and revisions in each of the Schools have been completed according to recommendations made by teachers and advice from international advisors.
- Supplementary classes in IT, art history, graphic design, geometric design, business, Sharia law, and English, Dari and Pashto languages were instituted in 2006.



Head of the Calligraphy school Mr. Qamarudin Cheshti displays a piece he created

### *Support for graduate businesses:*

- Turquoise Mountain continues to support Turquoise Mountain Institute graduates and provides important advice and guidance for individuals.
- In 2013, Turquoise Mountain assisted several graduates set up an initiative to teach woodcarving and ceramics to international employees based in Kabul. The training has been received well with more than 20 people turning up for weekly classes held in Murad Khani. The graduates gained teaching experience and an income while foreigners learned more about Afghan arts.



Mohammed Bashir Rasikh, a recent graduate of the Turquoise Mountain Institute, sells his products at Daudzai market in Kabul.

- In 2014 Turquoise Mountain established a series of cooperative workshops for graduate businesses in Murad Khani. This involved re-organizing existing equipment and machinery in an open plan workspace designed to accommodate both individuals and larger businesses, and aimed to grant as many businesses as possible access to these subsidized machineries. Over the next decade, Turquoise Mountain aims to build the Afghan brand, bring high quality handmade Afghan crafts to retail and luxury markets around the world, and grow the craft industry to be a significant contributor to the Afghan economy.
- In 2015, Turquoise Mountain provided intensive business mentoring to 15 of its businesses as part of a wider program to mentor 40 artisanal businesses across a range of crafts. This training was delivered by dedicated business skills trainers who used the Artisan Toolkit – a business training manual specifically designed for the Afghan artisan sector. Over the course of the program, running from July to October 2015, the 15 jewelry businesses received three hours of business training once a week covering topics from production and design to sales and marketing, and giving an overview of standard business practices along with practical tools to overcome common challenges.
- In 2014, 26 third-year students from the woodwork and jewelry & gem-cutting schools completed a one-month pilot apprenticeship program with six Turquoise Mountain-supported graduate businesses. They gained hands-on experience in setting up small businesses, product development, sales and marketing. Following this pilot, the apprenticeship program will be expanded in future years.

### *Institute Opening and Registration:*

The Institute is now fully functional in its permanent home located in the restored buildings of Murad Khani, a move which was completed in 2011. The Institute opening was attended by then US Ambassador Eikenberry, then Canadian Ambassador William Crosbie and representatives from the Afghan government.

- In March 2011, The Turquoise Mountain Institute for Afghan Art & Architecture was registered with the Afghan Ministry of Economy as a separate, independent legal entity, entirely under Afghan management.

*Awards:*

- Turquoise Mountain was awarded the 2013 UNESCO Award of Distinction for the restoration of Murad Khani’s Great Serai. Turquoise Mountain’s project was up against 47 entries from 16 countries across the Asia-Pacific region, and was the only Afghan entry to be considered. UNESCO praised the restoration work for setting a precedent for conservation work in Kabul.



Turquoise Mountain Institute students celebrating a TVET award in 2012

- In 2013, The Turquoise Mountain Institute was awarded first prize in the art and craft division of the annual Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Expo run by the Ministry of Education. Thousands of visitors attended the Expo with the Minister for Education personally congratulating the Turquoise Mountain Institute for its achievements.

*Student intake:*

- The Turquoise Mountain Institute runs its annual student recruitment from December to March each year. The process starts with the printing and distribution of application forms to schools, art institutions and cultural organizations in Kabul. The call for applications is also advertised on the radio, TV and the Institute website and social media pages. The applicants are invited for both a written exam and an interview.



Students’ admission exam 2014

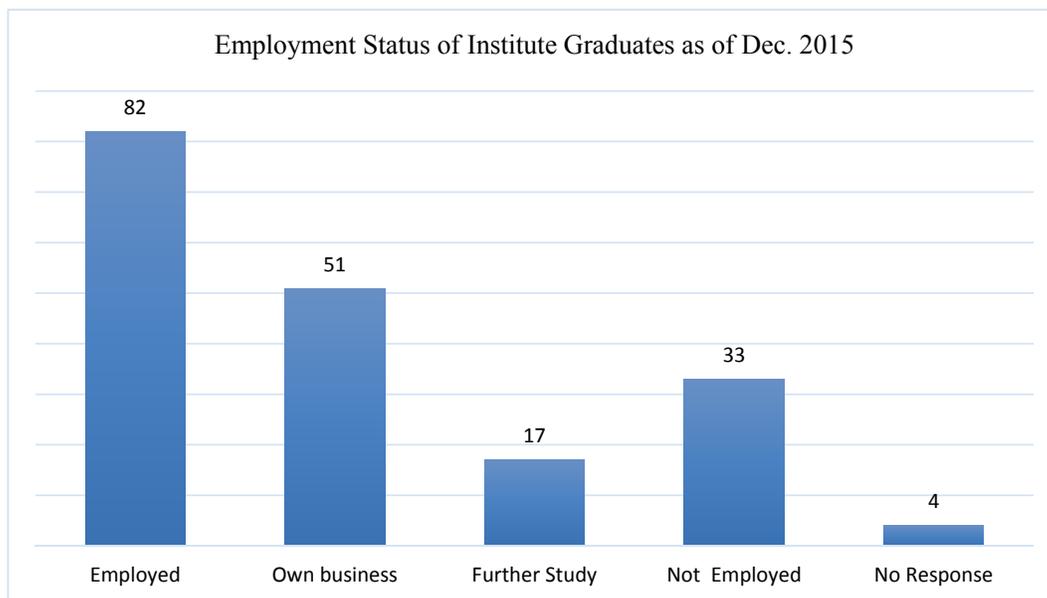
- In 2009, a more robust registration process was introduced including: a week of induction meetings with students carried out by teachers; presentations about the Institute; an increased level of coherence and documentation of registration procedures; signing a contract and a more formalized introduction ceremony for all new students; and a revised and updated student handbook to form part of the Institute Policy Manual.

- In 2015, the general level of applicants was considerably higher than in previous years, which reflects the heightened profile of Turquoise Mountain activities in recent years, with frequent coverage on Afghan television.

*Graduation and the Graduate survey:*

- In December 2009, the Institute ended the academic year by completing its first successful class graduation of 30 (23 male, 7 Female) students including 29 internationally certified students.
- Since 2009, 187 (139 male, 48 female) students graduated from Turquoise Mountain Institute in 2009 to 2015 (6 graduating classes), and a further 38 (32 male, 6) students will be graduating from the Institute in March 2016.
- In order to evaluate the impact of student training, Turquoise Mountain Institute conducts a semi-annual survey of its graduate students. In December 2015, the Institute conducted a survey of its 187 graduates. In addition to the data collected in previous surveys, this latest survey has collected more detailed data about the learning experience of graduates. This data is currently being analyzed and will be compiled with data about the graduating class of March 2016. Of those surveyed, 51 graduates (27 per cent) are craft business owners or partners in a craft business, 82 (44 per cent) are in craft-related employment, and 17 (9 per cent) are pursuing further studies. Of the remainder, 33 (18 per cent) graduates are unemployed, and 4 (2 per cent) didn't respond.

The graph below show numbers of students graduated each year and their employment status:



- A further 38 students that are graduating in March 2016 will be surveyed six months after their graduation and the results will be shared with USAID.

*High Profile international and domestic orders:*

- In 2013, Turquoise Mountain won a contract to provide wall art for the five-Star Anjum Hotel in Mecca. The order was subcontracted to several Turquoise Mountain-supported businesses,



Turquoise Mountain stall at Dubai Index, a trade fair

employing graduates of the Institute. Together these businesses provided over 500 ceramic plates and bowls, 400 carved wood panels, 5000 prints and over 400 original calligraphy and illumination works. This commission also provided employment to tens of other graduates and artisans, and helped build their capacity in the craft sector. The order was worth US\$650,000.

- 2014 and 2015 saw a number of orders from high profile retailers in the US and the UK. There were substantial orders for trunk shows at Bloomingdales in the US, as well as for the Oriental Institute in Chicago and for the Smithsonian Museum Shop in Washington D.C. Turquoise Mountain also provided an order of merchandise to coincide with an exhibition about Afghanistan at the Imperial War Museum in London. Furthermore, Turquoise Mountain has secured sales for Afghan jewelers with the following international retailers:

- *Pippa Small* – A London-based jewelry designer
- *Zara Simon* – A British jewelry designer
- *Bajalia* – a US-based retailer of ethical products
- *Far & Wide Collective* – a Canadian online retailer specializing in artisanal products from around the globe, with whom new collections have been developed with jewelry designers *Kara Hamilton* and *Jenny Bird*
- *Smithsonian Enterprises* – the retail arm of the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C.
- *Aayenda Jewelry* – a US/Afghan social enterprise.



Pippa Small with Saida looking at a jewelry design

### *National and International Exhibitions:*

- Since 2008, Turquoise Mountain-supported businesses and students and graduates of the Institute have displayed their works in 39 exhibitions, both outside and inside Afghanistan. Major international exhibitions of Afghan crafts included the Venice Biennale, the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, and Leighton House Museum in London, the V&A Museum of Childhood in London, and the upcoming exhibition at the Freer-Sackler Galleries of the Smithsonian in Washington, DC,



Turquoise Mountain's artisans work in Leighton House museum in UK.

- opening in March 2016. These exhibitions were aimed at showcasing authentic Afghan crafts, expanding the market for such products, and improving artisans' skills and confidence.
- Brining Afghan crafts and the story behind them to as wide an audience as possible – both outside and inside Afghanistan – is imperative, both in order to change perceptions about Afghan products but also to give artisans' work the exposure it needs. These 39 exhibitions facilitated by Turquoise Mountain over the last seven years have done just that.

### *Calligraphy Competitions and Art events:*

- During the life of the project, Turquoise Mountain's Culture Department has successfully conducted four Afghan Contemporary Art Prizes and four National Calligraphy Competitions in Afghanistan. Most recently on 14 September 2015, the Turquoise Mountain Institute held a very successful combined calligraphy workshop, competition and exhibition in Herat city. These competitions aimed to find Afghanistan's most talented young calligraphers, and increase interest in, and awareness of, Afghanistan's rich calligraphy traditions. In addition, the Culture Department of Turquoise Mountain ran a series of calligraphy workshops for local children attending the Murad Khani Primary School where the Turquoise Mountain Institute students taught the primary school children the ancient *Nastaliq* script – the most popular contemporary style among classical Persian calligraphy scripts.



Former Minister of Information and Culture, Abdul Karim Khorram presents Art Prize to a female artist

- In 2013, Turquoise Mountain signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Shamsa Children's Village to provide calligraphy classes to 20 orphaned children at the Institute for two

months. The classes were taught by two female calligraphy graduates and were a huge success. An exhibition of calligraphy pieces produced by these children and war victims was held in the annual New Year celebration in Murad Khani.

*Educational Exchanges:*

- In 2012, the Turquoise Mountain Institute established strong links with Indian jewelers, which has had a visible effect on the quality of jewelry education and production. Several Indian inlay masters travelled to Kabul to teach courses in stone inlay to Turquoise Mountain students. In addition, 21 graduates participated in an intensive six-month jewelry-training course in India conducted by Future Brilliance. They learned how to cut precious gemstones, how to distinguish original from fake stones, design traditional and modern jewelry pieces, and establish/manage a small production unit.



The Institute ceramic school teacher teaches students of Fine Art Faculty of Kabul University at Turquoise Mountain

- In September 2014, calligraphy and miniature painting masters from the Institute provided training on traditional paper-making techniques to four students from the Fine Arts Faculty of Kabul University. Turquoise Mountain also provided more paper-making training sessions at Kabul University. Moreover, the Ceramics Department of the Institute provided training to 13 students from Kabul University's Fine Arts Faculty on how to make pottery and natural glazes in April 2015.
- In 2011, The Institute hosted a workshop on "Afghanistan Cultural Heritage" in Murad Khani. 35 participants representing the Ministry of Culture, the Technical Education Wing of the Ministry of Education, Kabul Museum, Fine Arts Faculty from University of Kabul and Turquoise Mountain Institute's own staff participated in the event in April 2011.
- Exposure and study visits were organized for the students in order to broaden their horizons and capacity for learning through observing traditional arts at historical sites. Visits were made to the National Archives, the Afghan National Gallery, and the French Cultural Institute in Kabul, as well as various sites of cultural significance around Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat.

### *Teacher Training and Arts Mentoring:*

- Between 2008 and 2015, 63 teacher-training courses were conducted by the Institute's Education Department. This form of training was conducted internally. 45 male and 7 female teachers and teaching assistants from the four schools participated in the trainings. The teachers were trained in teaching methodologies, lesson plans, and other relevant educational skills. Additionally, each teacher prepared a "lessons learned" presentation from their classroom experience and shared it with the other teachers during the training. Teacher training was also provided to three teaching assistants by the Institute's Education Department.



Teacher training session at Turquoise Mountain Institute

- In 2009, an international ceramics advisor was hired to solve the long-term problems associated with Afghan ceramic wares. His knowledge and experience played a central role in ensuring that TM's artisans were finally able to make high-quality, strong, evenly-glazed ceramic goods. Moreover, a Turkmen jeweler visited the Institute and provided lessons to second year students of the jewelry school, making a significant contribution to the development of the curriculum and teaching at the school; Turkmen jewelry is now a popular subject of study in the department.
- In 2010, an international consultant provided training sessions to the jewelry school teachers on technical weaknesses in their jewelry design. She also gave classes to third year students on the history of art in Afghanistan and the region.
- In 2011, an art history consultant was hired, who taught the art of tile making in a traditional and historical perspective, along with different forms of tile art that originated in various parts of Afghanistan over the centuries. Furthermore, a miniature-painting master from Herat was hired to teach advanced color theory and hand drawing techniques to calligraphy students and teachers. At the same time, an internationally known artist and miniature paint master, Khadim Ali, taught miniature painting and illumination work.
- In 2012 four students, two graduates and nine masters from the Institute traveled to Doha, Qatar and participated in a capacity-building workshop in preparation for the exhibition at the Museum of Islamic Art. They attended workshops with museum curators, lectures on the analysis of historical and ancient arts, and learned techniques to ensure high quality products for the exhibition.
- In 2014, the Institute held two training sessions for 34 Institute art teachers, teacher assistants and graduates in Kabul. These courses were run by Dr. Sabrina Puppini, Head of the Art Education program at the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, and Gerard Bruel, Head of Business Development at Turquoise Mountain. The courses covered different teaching methods and the

costing and pricing of products respectively. The training helped the beneficiaries to raise their general level of art education, as well as informing them on how to price their products to compete with the national and international market.

#### *Classes and Examinations:*

- The Turquoise Mountain Institute follows the Ministry of Education Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) structure of a three-year academic program divided into six



A graphic design class at the Turquoise Mountain Institute

semesters. Besides vocational subjects, students are taught in supplementary subjects such as IT, art history, graphic design, geometric design, business, Sharia law, and English, Dari and Pashto languages. Exams are held at the end of each semester, and the results are shared with the Ministry of Education TVET sections to be officially recorded, and for the purpose of issuing certificates after graduation.

- The Turquoise Mountain Institute celebrates the first day of each semester with a ceremony for students who got high marks during the previous semester. Since 2008, female students have consistently won prizes in recognition of their outstanding success in their exams.

#### *Turquoise Mountain Institute Communication Tools:*

- *Website, Management Information System and Facebook page*

In 2014, the Turquoise Mountain Institute developed and launched the Institute website, Management Information System (MIS) and its new Facebook page. The Dari versions of the Institute website and Facebook page aim to provide information about TMI programs, exhibitions, news and the intake process to a variety of Afghan stakeholders including students, graduates, government officials and the general public. The MIS expedites data entry, organizes students' data, generates reports and allows teachers to input student attendance information directly into the system, as well as enabling students to review their grades and timetables online. Moreover, the MIS serves as a database for project monitoring and evaluation for the Turquoise Mountain Institute, and helps to improve access to information, transparency and the overall professionalism of the Institute. The Facebook page name is (انسټیټوټ تعلیمات هنر ها و معمارۍ افغانۍ) (فیروزکوه), and the website can be found at [www.tmi.edu.af](http://www.tmi.edu.af).

#### *Library:*

Turquoise Mountain Institute library provides services, resources and research support to the graduates and students of the Institute, enabling students to study in a quiet environment. The Turquoise Mountain Institute library consists of 3,840 books in such subjects as Afghan History, World History, Art History, Graphic Design, Woodwork, Calligraphy, Jewelry, Ceramics, Literature, Business, and Information Technology. Since 2012, Turquoise Mountain Institute

masters have written and published three books in jewelry, woodwork and ceramics & tiles. These books have been printed and distributed to universities, public libraries across Afghanistan, and some copies donated to the Turquoise Mountain Institute library.

*Visitors and Outreach:*

- *Nawruz Events*

Every year Turquoise Mountain joins with the local community in celebrating a traditional Nawruz event in Murad Khani. (Nawruz is the Persian New Year.) The celebration includes craft exhibits, storytelling, a circus show, traditional Afghan music and a presentation by the Murad Khani Public School students. Residents from the local community, donors, government officials, and representatives from various national and international organizations attend the event. In 2015 the Nawruz event was recorded by TOLO TV and broadcast during one of its most famous shows “*Mehman Yar*” which receives millions of viewers in Afghanistan and abroad. The main purpose of this event is to maintain good relations with the community and keep community members informed of Turquoise Mountain’s activities and plans.



Turquoise Mountain together with the community celebrating a Nawruz event in Murad Khani.

- During the life of the project, there have been visits from high-profile visitors including former Afghan President Hamid Karzai, The Prince of Wales, former US Ambassador Eikenberry, ambassadors from the UK, Sweden, Denmark, France, Indonesia, Egypt, India, and the UAE, as well as members of UNAMA, ISAF, and the Afghan government.



Former president of Afghanistan H.E Hamid Karzai during a visit to the Turquoise Mountain Institute

- Turquoise Mountain has become one of the most important tourist destinations in Kabul for national and international visitors. The visitors are shown the restored historic buildings, workshops and the students’ art pieces. On average each year Turquoise Mountain staff toured 420 national and

international visitors around the Institute, workshops and local community. It has also been used by filmmakers and in the music videos of several famous Afghan singers. Meanwhile, there were several national and international documentaries made highlighting Turquoise Mountain activities and artisans.

*Publicity:*

Turquoise Mountain's work has featured in numerous international publications. Most notably Turquoise Mountain's work featured in the following media stories:

- Samira Kitman, a female graduate of Turquoise Mountain Institute honored as "Best Woman Entrepreneur". US Today, March 2015:  
<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/03/17/afghan-businesswoman-of-the-year/24727005/>
- Aramco World Magazine: Article about Turquoise Mountain Doha Exhibition, August 2015:  
<https://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/201504/ferozkoh.renewing.the.arts.of.the.turquoise.mountain.htm>
- An overview of the project on BBC TV News, January 2014:  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-25702310>
- Article about Turquoise Mountain Institute activities- Islamic Magazine, February 2012:  
[http://islamicartsmagazine.com/magazine/view/turquoise\\_mountains\\_institute\\_for\\_afghan\\_arts\\_and\\_architecture/](http://islamicartsmagazine.com/magazine/view/turquoise_mountains_institute_for_afghan_arts_and_architecture/)
- NATO TV's clips on: February 2014:
  - ✓ Storai and Saida, students in the jewelry school <https://vimeo.com/86117283>
  - ✓ Ustad Matin who teaches ceramics <http://vimeo.com/86126565>
  - ✓ Ustad Massoud who teaches woodwork <http://vimeo.com/86126567>
- The Potter: Crafting Afghanistan's future, January 2015:  
<http://www.khaama.com/the-potter-crafting-afghanistans-future-9899>
- Launch of Turquoise Mountain's jewelry range in collaboration with British designer Pippa Small at *Monsoon*, the UK, April 2013  
<http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/news-features/TMG9967280/Great-and-Small-Jewellery-designer-Pippa-Small-ethical-collection-for-Monsoon.html> (*The Daily Telegraph*)  
<http://www.vogue.co.uk/blogs/the-green-style-blog/2013/pippa-small-collaborates-with-monsoon> (*Vogue, The Green Style Blog*)
- *The Afghan Embassy in London has put up a piece about Mecca project Commission on their website:* <http://afghanistanembassy.org.uk/english/?p=661>
- The Borgen Project, Turquoise Mountain Arts, April 2014:  
<http://borgenproject.org/turquoise-mountain-arts/>
- Luxury Afghan jewelry finds way to US and UK, October 2015:  
<http://www.khaama.com/luxury-afghan-jewelry-finds-way-to-us-and-uk-1622>



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Pippa Small, Turquoise Mountain's most prominent designer, was named as the 'Most Socially Responsible Luxury Brand 2015' (Instagram screenshot)

# Ethical producers can bring hope amid war and poverty

Traceability *Grace Cook* reports on projects from Afghanistan to Africa

In a workshop in Kabul, 25 jewellery craftsmen are sitting cross-legged on the floor, labouring over the new season designs. Women hover over machines to cut facets into gemstones – Afghan tiger's eye and lapis lazuli – which will become the centrepiece for Pippa Small's first seasonal collection with the Turquoise Mountain charity.

Against a backdrop of war and economic instability, Kabul's jewellery trade is resilient. Ms Small, the London-based ethical jeweller appointed MBE in 2013 for services to ethical jewellery production, has been working with the charity for the past eight years. Launched internationally last month, the 75-piece seasonal line reflects her commitment to the area and its artisans.

Ms Small says that now is not the time for her to walk away, despite the danger. "When people have security, when they have stability and an income . . . that's when people will say no to Taliban and no to Isis [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant]."

Launching an ethical jewellery line in Afghanistan is not easy, given the threat from terrorist groups. In the past eight years, the charity's jewellers have moved workshops four times; their first, located in an old shipping container near the Indian embassy, was destroyed when a bomb fell nearby. There are also difficulties with determining the origin of gems, gold and silver as they are not always traceable. Moreover, under the Taliban regime, which fell from power in 2001, jewellery was banned. The trade remains in its infancy.

Ms Small is one of the only jewellery designers working in Afghanistan. It is not a safe place for foreigners, or for Afghans seen to be working with them, so international input to regulate the industry is almost impossible.

"Now you can't take a taxi. You can't walk anywhere," says Ms Small. "It's more and more dangerous." As a result, Afghanistan lacks the organisation in countries such as India and Mozambique, introduced by Gemfields and De Beers (suppliers of rough stones to brands such as Boucheron, Amrapali and Tiffany & Co), which have regulated the gem and diamond industries in the conflict-free areas they operate in.

Instead of carefully planned excava-



If responsibly managed, mining delivers benefits for local economies

tions, in Afghanistan sites are often blasted with dynamite. Not only is this dangerous for the miners, but the stones are also blown up, says Ms Small.

The country has the potential to be a world leader in gemstone trading, based on its proximity to India, the biggest industry for gemstone imports, and its mineral-rich earth containing emeralds, rubies and tourmaline. But continuing violence and lack of infrastructure and education means it cannot control its trade. In 2006, 90-95 per cent of Afghanistan's gems (worth an estimated \$1 trn) left the country illegally, according to the Ministry of Mines, Afghanistan. Today, 70 per cent of Turquoise Mountain's line is sold as export, with the remainder kept for local sales to Afghanistan's emerging middle class.

**'We could always do more. You don't want to think by spoiling your wife, you're ruining someone's life'**

Ethics and traceability are an important focus for the big brands. "People are realising the effects of unethical mining, because today you can actually see it on the internet," says Tarang Arora, chief executive of the Jaipur-based jewellery house Amrapali.

Christian Dior and Bulgari are among the 600-plus jewellery houses that abide by the standards of the Responsible Jewellery Council. In 2013, Chopard – a member of the RJC – launched a Green Carpet Collection, using fair-mined gold and traceable black opals from the Aurora Gems mine in the Australian outback. Gucci employs its own gemologists and imposed a social accountability framework in 2007 to ensure its gold and diamond products are 100 per cent conflict free.

"If you're a public company, and you've got a big international persona, you have to [be ethical]," says Ian Harebottle, chief executive of Gemfields. "We don't operate in war-torn or conflict areas," he adds.

Gemfields' work at a newly discovered ruby mine in the Cabo Delgado province of Mozambique illustrates the potential benefits for mining economies.

"You have to put in roads and power and water. You have to build the team," says Mr Harebottle. At the Montepuez mine Gemfields employs about 800 workers. Once fully operational, that number will probably double, he adds. "We are one of the largest employers in the region."

However, there are issues in even the most established infrastructures. "No matter what we're doing for the environment and for society, we could always do more," says Mr Harebottle. "You don't want to think by spoiling your wife that you're ruining someone's life. We don't want to leave the area the way we found it. We've got to make it right, make it better," he adds.

Ms Small cannot state that 100 per cent of her Turquoise Mountain line is ethical, but the work in Kabul is encouraging a local economy. "What we can do now is make sure that the craftsmen we work with are paid well and that their work is of an international standard," says Ms Small. "Until the country reaches a state of peace, I think anything else would be unrealistic."

The Financial Times chose to feature Afghan-made jewelry, and did so twice in 2015: once in an article about ethical jewelry production, focusing on Pippa Small, and the second time in the supplement "How To Spend It", the luxury style and shopping component of the Financial Times.

### 3. ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

In 2014, Turquoise Mountain together with USAID undertook an extensive 5-year review of the Monitoring & Evaluation Plan for the BLT program. As a result of this process, the program performance indicators were revised to align more closely with USAID Afghanistan mission-wide indicators as well as to more accurately represent the intended outputs of the program. Much of the information captured by the pre-2014 indicators crosses over with the current Performance Indicators.

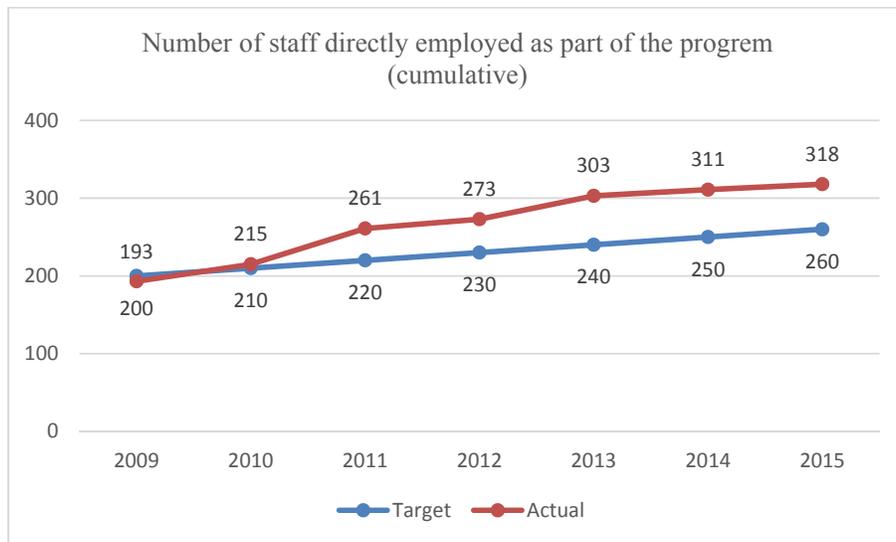
The following are the revised/current performance indicators:

*PI 4.4.1 Number of people receiving new employment or better employment (including better self-employment) as a result of participation in USG-funded workforce development programs.*

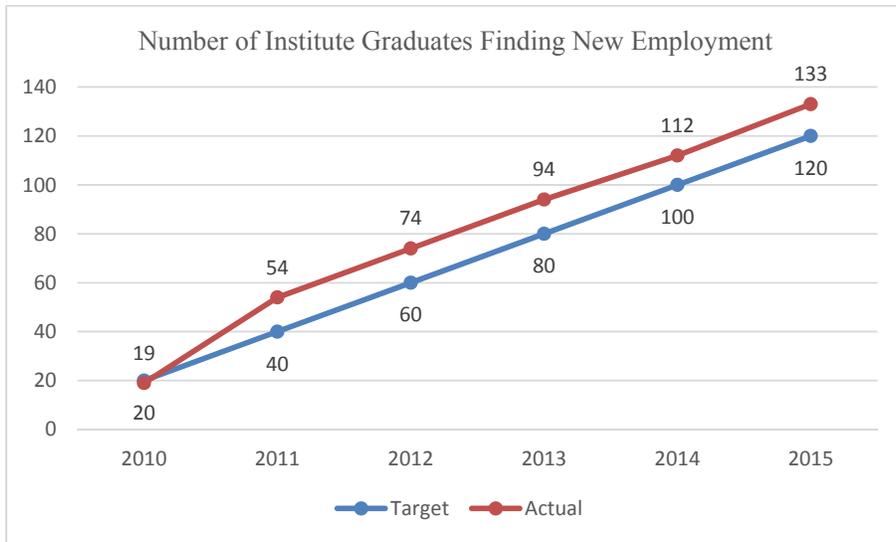
This indicator tracks the number of people that are directly employed as part of the program, and the number of the Institute graduates that have found new or improved employment within one year of graduating.

As of December 2015, the total for this indicator is 451 (target: 380).

The following graph presents the cumulative number of staff that were directly employed by the program across all four components (Urban Regeneration, Community Development, Education, and Business Development). Note: this does not include unskilled and semi-skilled laborers employed on the urban regeneration component of the project, of whom there were some 1,100 over the life of the project.



The following graph presents the number of Institute graduates that found new employment following graduation. There was no target for this metric in 2009. The target was developed in 2010.

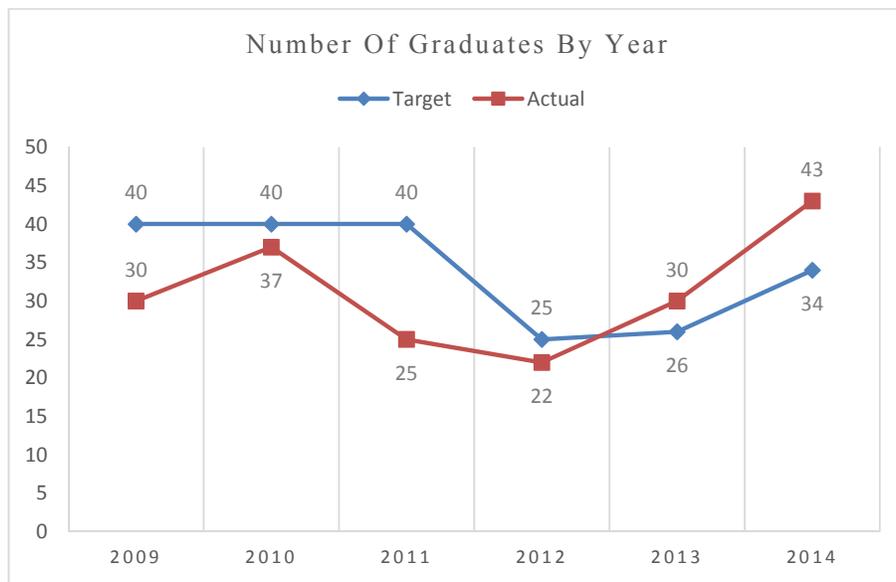


*PI 4.4.2 People completing USG-funded, market-driven TVET programs.*

This indicator measures the number of individuals who have increased workforce skills by completing training through the USG-funded workforce development program provided by the Turquoise Mountain Institute. The training was conducted for 40 hours per week over three years, and resulted in a dual qualification awarded by the Afghan Ministry of Education and City & Guilds, an international accrediting body based in the UK.

As of December 2015, the total for this indicator is 187 (target: 205).

The following graph shows the number of graduates by year.



The number of graduates fell behind target in the period 2009-2012 due to some students leaving the Institute, which resulted in fewer graduates than anticipated. The students left for a number of

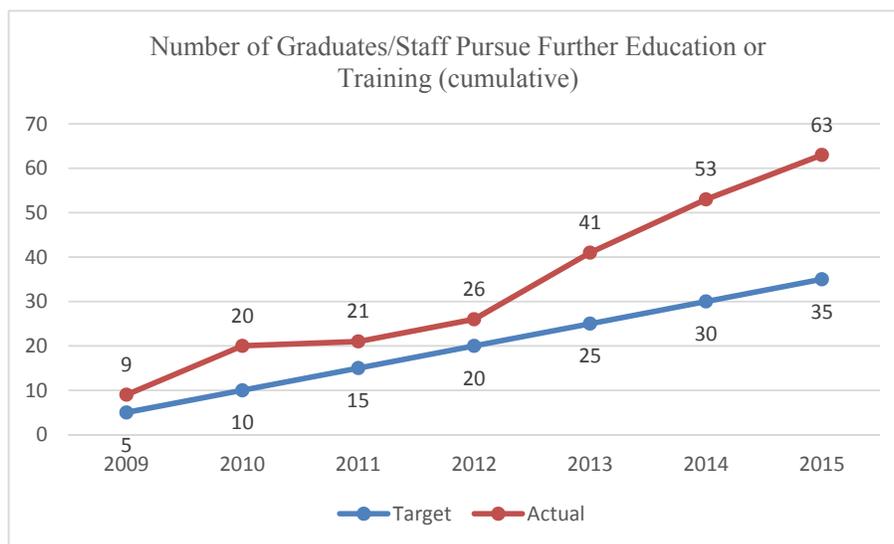
reasons including: emigration, marriage, or finding job opportunities to support their family. In order to avoid this in following years, Turquoise Mountain strengthened the vetting process for admitted students and increased the number of students accepted each year, and as a result the actual numbers were above target in 2013 and 2014.

*PI 4.4.3 People transitioning to further education and training within six months of completing a USG-funded TVET programs.*

This indicator measures the number of Institute graduates that pursue further education or training within six months of graduation, and the number of Institute staff pursuing such studies after completing six months' employment with Turquoise Mountain.

The Graduate Opportunities Department conducted graduate surveys every six months. The survey consists of a structured interview. The interview is conducted on the phone, online or face-to-face with graduates.

As of December 2015, the total for this indicator is 63 (target: 35).



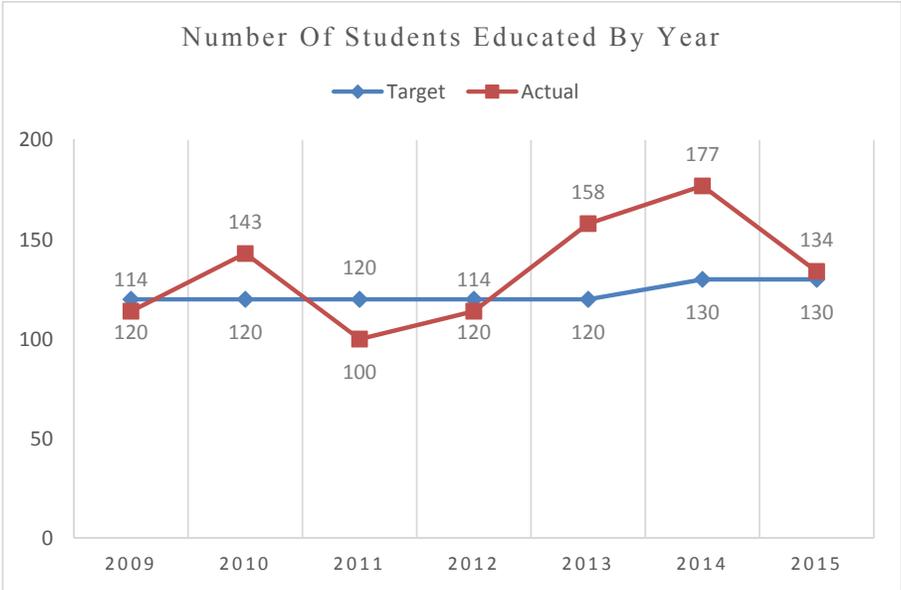
The above graph shows the number of Institute graduates and staff that pursue further education or training within six months of their graduation or their employment with Turquoise Mountain.

*PI 4.4.4 Full time equivalent students in USG-funded TVET programs.*

This indicator measures the number of full time equivalent students trained through the schools of woodwork, ceramics, jewelry and gem-cutting, and calligraphy and miniature painting at the Turquoise Mountain Institute.

As of December 2015, the total for this indicator is 940 (target: 860).

The following graph presents the number of FTE students enrolled at the Institute by year.



#### 4. SUCCESS STORY:

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“THE BODY NEEDS FOOD TO GROW AND THE SOUL NEEDS ART TO MOVE ON”

Sughra Husseini was born in Kabul in 1989, the child of a day labourer and a seamstress. Despite both her parents being illiterate, the value of education was strongly impressed upon Sughra and her siblings. Sadly, when she was just nine years old, her father was killed, caught in the crossfire of a shootout. Five years later her mother also died, leaving her in the care of her older brother.

Orphaned and living with her brother in the west of Kabul, Sughra grew interested in calligraphy after seeing her brother practicing the art form at home. It was a form of escape for them, providing some much-needed relief from the stress of daily life. With his support, she applied to study at the Turquoise Mountain Institute, specialising in calligraphy and miniature painting.

Sughra is now one of Turquoise Mountain's rising stars, receiving one of the top marks in her year. Alongside international commissions, Sughra has exhibited and sold her artworks at major exhibitions in Kabul. She recently participated in an exposure trip to Kuwait. In the future, she plans to open an artisan business in Kabul, which will train and empower other girls like her.

Studying calligraphy and miniature painting has helped Sughra come to terms with the suffering and loss she has experienced: “Before I joined the Institute I was depressed and weak from all the problems I'd gone through.... studying at the Institute has given me a lot of strength.”



## TURQUOISE MOUNTAIN GRADUATE SAMIRA KITMAN WINS “AFGHAN WOMEN’S ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR”

24-year-old Samira Kitman competed against 307 women entrepreneurs across the country and won the “Afghan women’s entrepreneur of the year” award, presented during a celebration for International Women’s Day on March 8, 2015 at the Women’s Center of the American University of Afghanistan. She said that her childhood dream had come true. “When I was eight years old, living as a refugee in Pakistan, I told my parents that I wanted to become a famous woman in the future in my home country of Afghanistan. They laughed and told me just to get an education.” When the Taliban was overthrown, her family returned home along with tens of thousands of Afghans in 2002.

To pursue her passion for art and design, Samira decided to study at the Turquoise Mountain Institute. After graduating in 2010, she started her own business, “Meftah-e-Hunar” (*The Key of Art*), producing illuminated calligraphic artworks and providing employment for young women. “My business so far has taught calligraphy and miniature painting to 90 young girls,” said Samira. In 2014, Turquoise Mountain secured a \$650,000 commission to provide the interior artwork for a five-star hotel in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. A portion of the commission was awarded to Samira’s business, which produced 600 original hand-painted calligraphy pieces as well as 8,000 prints for the 1,700 rooms of the Anjum Hotel, Mecca, earning her business over \$65,000 in revenues and employing 30 women over six months.

Samira owes a lot of her success to USAID, the largest long-term supporter of the Turquoise Mountain Institute, which gave Samira the opportunity not only to learn her craft, but also to take her first steps to becoming an independent businesswoman.



## 5. ASSESSMENT AND SURVEILLANCE DATA;

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Results based management is an integral part of TMT's design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, and underpins our reporting and performance assessments. Each planned activity is assessed in relation to its cause and effect relationship with expected results at the output level to ensure a proper linkage to the achievement of outcomes. All inputs and activities across the breadth of the project are regularly monitored and evaluated against intended project outputs. Each component of the program contributes to the goals of TMT and all projects are carefully monitored with data collected on a monthly basis.

Monthly progress reports were compiled by the Director of the Institute, to provide a summary of project activities. This monitors any changes to the curriculum and the training of staff by local and international experts. Daily attendance is taken for all practical and supplementary classes, as well as records for all visits to sites of historic and artistic importance. Finally, these reports tracked the employment progress of graduates and monitored the impact of the graduate liaison office. These reports are collected by the Development and Communications team and combined in order to provide the programmatic progress reports as requested by USAID, as well as the requirements for other public and private donors. In all cases, data is stored in both hard copy in the office and soft copy on the shared internal computer network.

## 6. COST EFFECTIVENESS:

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- Turquoise Mountain continues to ensure that its programs are as cost effective as possible. While salaries for development workers in NGOs have continued to rise across the country, Turquoise Mountain uses a salary scale that ensures salaries within the Institute are reasonable.
- The Institute offers a stipend for students. The payment of stipends are part of the Institute's pro-poor policy, allowing students from any family background to be able to study at the Institute. However, this does add a significant extra cost. Now that the reputation of the Institute is well established around Kabul, and there are large numbers of applicants for the Institute each year, Turquoise Mountain will explore ways in which to reduce the stipend.
- Turquoise Mountain draws in its activities on an investment made over the last eight years. All its assets – including over one hundred restored buildings in the center of Kabul, full community support, a well-equipped teaching Institute, experienced teachers, and a strong curriculum – are leveraged to create a large impact on the wider Afghan craft industry. This craft revival, located in the now-restored historic area of Murad Khani, provides one of the most visible and tangible success stories in Afghanistan since 2001, a story which continues to be told in newspaper articles and documentaries across the world. Such a story is helping to rebrand both Afghan crafts as high-quality sought-after products, and Afghanistan as a place of rich cultural traditions and craft skills.
- Political uncertainty and the security situation can add significant additional costs from time to time. These have to a large degree been mitigated in the second half of the BLT project by "Afghanizing" all the project staff, including senior management.

## 7. GENDER EQUALITY:

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The promotion of gender equality lies at the center of all TMT's activities, and is our central cross-cutting theme across all programs. TMT's programs involve Afghan women as decision-makers, participants and beneficiaries as much as possible.

The project integrated women into formal vocational training; provided more employment opportunities to women; and ensured women have access to resources and services across all TMT programs. 30 per cent of the students that have studied in Turquoise Mountain Institute are women. 50 per cent of students who have passed through the jewelry and calligraphy schools are women. Women also have equal access to the student intake process. Female students continue to maintain a high attendance record. TMT also provided support to female Institute graduates that sought employment, further education or business opportunities. Additionally, TMT established markets for crafts that employed and indirectly benefit women.

## 8. CHALLENGES:

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- Helping students find related employment upon finishing the program required significant work. Turquoise Mountain has worked to overcome this challenge in a number of different ways. Turquoise Mountain has promoted stronger connections between graduates of the program and different craft businesses in Kabul. In one example of this, several woodwork graduates have been given commissions from Atelier UN, a Turquoise Mountain-supported wood workshop.
- The increasingly difficult security situation in Kabul has meant that the use of foreign experts and consultants has had to be restricted. A proposed calligraphy expert from abroad had to be delayed due to the uncertain situation over elections in 2014, and the Turquoise Mountain Institute delayed the winter market and calligraphy competition award ceremony twice in 2014 for the same reason. It was also a challenging environment for graduate businesses.
- The young jewelry businesses have struggled at times from a lack of access to equipment and machinery when they are starting up. To alleviate this issue, Turquoise Mountain has designed a cooperative workshop space for graduates to use, and is constantly finding new ways to fund graduate jewelers' independently established businesses.
- Quality control remains an issue with our graduate jewelry businesses, many of which have been established recently and are not yet used to the exacting standards of international retailers. Turquoise Mountain's Business Development Department has therefore formulated a system of quality checks to ensure the highest quality is maintained.
- Due to security issues during Afghanistan presidential elections, Turquoise Mountain's international staff have been reduced in number. Restricted movement among expatriates and uncertainty surrounding the election results made the following period a challenging environment for new business, and impacted Turquoise Mountain's capacity to give direct support to the Institute's most recent graduates.
- The bridge between training in the Institute, and the workplace, will always be a challenge and focus for the management. It is indeed a challenge for the whole TVET sector in Afghanistan, with the government-run TVET centers struggling to make any connection between their curricula and the labor market. The Institute has worked yearly with third year students and

graduate businesses to prepare them, and adapt the curriculum to match the needs of the market.

## 9. LESSONS LEARNED:

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The Turquoise Mountain Institute for Afghan arts and architecture aims to regenerate traditional Afghan arts and architecture, and to train a new generation of Afghan artisans.

- During the life of the Institute a number of students left the Institute. The students left for a number of reasons including: marriage, finding a job with a higher income, further study in public educational institutions, as well as disciplinary issues leading to them being asked to leave the Institute. In order to overcome this issue the Institute endeavors to work with all students and their families to encourage students to stay, and allow them to take part in small extracurricular projects after their study hours.
- In order for the students to learn their lessons effectively and efficiently the Turquoise Mountain Institute separated the jewelry and calligraphy schools in 2008, each into two sections: jewelry & gem-cutting, and calligraphy & miniature painting. Students were not able to learn multi-craft lessons at the same time and didn't have enough time to practice the skills they were learning. This separation resulted in a more focused syllabus and greater specialization for students, which has resulted in greater opportunities upon graduation.
- Over the last few years the number of applicants to the Ceramics school has decreased. Also there was a significant student dropout rate in the Ceramics department. The reasons for this included a lack of market demand for Afghan pottery and a low number of job opportunities in the field. The Institute management team decided to change the recruitment process for the Ceramics school, and additionally provided on the job training for those students that were interested. In 2015, Ceramics was exempted from Ministry of Education requirements so that the syllabus could be more tailored to the specific needs of the students and the market.
- In order to improve disciplinary standards at the Institute, the Institute set up an advisory committee. This committee works closely with students who are experiencing disciplinary issues. A teacher will be assigned for two weeks to an individual student, talking them through issues that have arisen, monitoring their behavior and reporting to the committee members in their monthly meeting. Moreover, the education team has implemented new rules and regulations for the student intake which include a more vigorous application process during which each potential student will undergo an intensive two-week trial including written, practical and design exams. During this trial their behavior and skills are closely observed by the *Ustads*, with the best students selected for enrolment. These changes made the students more cognizant of discipline and generated greater respect for the Institute's culture and policy.
- During the last nine years all the students' and *Ustads*' craft pieces were archived in the Institute storage facilities. Much of the background of these pieces is unknown. Therefore, TMI management developed a database to serve as an inventory for all crafts produced in the Institute including relevant information such as: name of the craftsman; when the piece was made; what the piece symbolizes; what the inspiration for the piece was and so forth.
- The graduate opportunities program needed to be assessed in order to meet the growing number of graduates and demands that occur as the Institute became more established and well-known, both nationally and internationally. Additionally, an assessment also needed to take place regarding the opportunities survey and how it can better fit the M&E framework requested by most donors as well as the Development and Communications office. There has been some difficulty in the past in receiving correct and/or updated information in a timely manner. The

Institute started conducting a bi-annual survey of the graduates to better understand the graduate employment situation. The survey was reviewed by the Director of the Institute and analyzed by the Development and Communications department, and its findings were shared with TM and TMI senior management, donors and stakeholders.

- Without the implementation of Institute policies and procedures, departments have had some difficulty in processing operational and programmatic activities, which has led to miscommunication and occasionally slower execution of activities. In order to overcome these challenges the Institute developed policies and procedures for the students and TMI staff to be implemented accordingly.