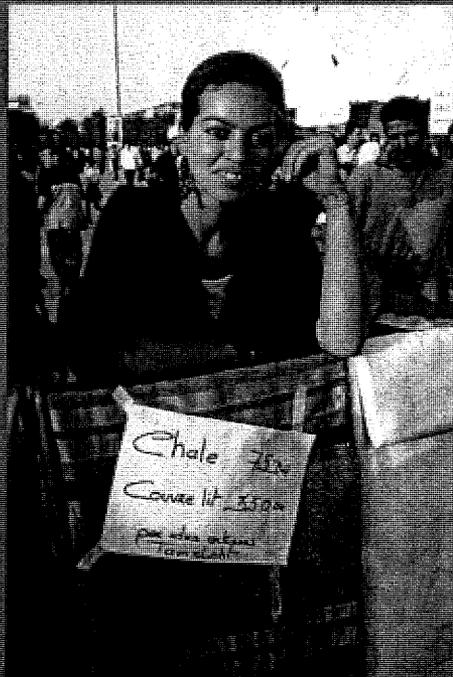


Market Access, Rural Outreach And Craft (MAROC)

FINAL PROJECT REPORT
Submitted August 2006



Contract No.:
HFP-A-00-01-00023-00
Date: June, 2006

St. Program Director:
Lane S. Pollack
lane_pollack@aidtoartisans.org

Program Officer: Elikem T. Archer
elikem_archer@aidtoartisans.org

Final Project Report Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Project Background and Objectives.....	3
MAROC Objectives:	3
MEPI and USAID Programming.....	4
MEPI and USAID Support	4
Project Participants	4
Final Report Objectives	5
Program Inputs & Activities	5
Artisan Identification.....	5
Product Design and Development.....	6
Product development for local markets	7
Product design for the US market	7
Long-term Local Design Capacity	7
Capacity Building & Business Training.....	8
Formal Training.....	8
Mentoring	9
Market Access.....	9
Market Research & Strategy.....	9
Local Marketing.....	10
US Market.....	11
Ongoing sales representation activities included.....	12
Project Achievements	13
Long-term Impact.....	13
Family Economy:.....	13
Confidence & Capability:.....	13
Market Readiness/Exposure:.....	14
Design Consciousness:.....	14
Association Strengthening:.....	14
Management.....	14
Project Closeout.....	15
Key Success Factors	15
Local training.....	15
Proactive buyer lead follow-up.....	16
Local marketing.....	16
Lessons Learned & Remaining Needs.....	16
Participant Selection:.....	16
Participant Training.....	16
Export Activities:.....	16
Lead-Free Pottery	17
Strengthening the local distribution channel:	17

Market Access, Rural Outreach and Craft (MAROC) Final Report August 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aid to Artisans' Market Access, Rural Outreach and Craft (MAROC) project was initiated in October 2004 to provide integrated business services to the craft sector in Morocco. The goal of the project was to invigorate the Moroccan craft sector through product development, training and market linkages to the United States. **The project impacted 2,776 participants (61% women) and leveraged US\$160,500 FOB (approximately US \$950,000 in US retail value) in sales for rural and peri-urban microentrepreneurs.**

The MAROC project was a 2-year US\$500,000, MEPI-funded and USAID-administered project which covered Marrakech, Tameslought, Safi, Imilchil, Essouaira, K'laat M'gouna. Project activities and outputs included

- Training activities: seven formal workshops, often to better equip Peace Corps Volunteers to work with large rural producer groups; formal sessions at the Nomadic Caravans; and extensive individual mentoring with producers.
- Market links: seven Nomadic Caravans held at local festivals to introduce artisans directly to the market; 14 foreign buyers placed orders in Morocco and six buyers visited the country; 13 Moroccan businesses exhibited at three US trade shows; five US trade shows scouted for Moroccan producers;
- Product development: 25 new lines of products for local and international markets were developed; one local designer mentored.

The project shifted to focus almost exclusively on rural producers mid-way through implementation at the funders' request. Project activities wrapped up in May 2006, four months before the anticipated project close due to demand for project services from the Moroccan craft sector and additional funding that has been slow to materialize. Despite the short duration of the project, **project impacted exceeded target numbers – reaching 2,276 (500 target) more participants and 14% more than projected sales. ATA's projections show that an additional US \$100,000 FOB (US \$600,000 retail value) in sales in the first year following the project's close from the market links created during the implementation.**

While the MAROC project made strides in improving the sector, there is still enormous need to develop the craft sector, which employs nearly one third of Morocco's economically active population. One critical obstacle is the inefficient supply chain that moves product from rural production areas to urban markets: multiple intermediaries result in poor market intelligence for rural producers and a low percentage of the final price to the producer. Increased effectiveness of this critical link will result in strengthened linkages between actors in the value chain, and lead to the meeting of the demand for Moroccan craft products both locally and internationally. Additionally, there is substantial ceramics production that still depends on lead-based glazes, which pose a hazard to artisans, consumers, and the environment. Introduction and adoption of existing lead-free techniques in the country will lead to environmentally sustainable practices while increasing the options for more diversified product lines and collections.

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The Moroccan craft sector provides employment to approximately 30% of the economically active population in Morocco, and accounts for 10% of the nation's GDP. The nation's artisans work with clay, wood, metal, and diverse natural fibers to create a range of handmade crafts including ceramics, woodwork, ironwork, woven and embroidered textiles. Craft production provides productive employment to the rural poor in their own communities, and also enables communities to maintain traditions and skills while enhancing cultural continuity in the face of the homogenizing tendencies of globalization. It also creates distinct opportunities for cultural tourism, which contributes to economic growth in rural areas.

The Market Access, Rural Outreach and Craft (MAROC) project was initiated in October 2004 to provide integrated business services to the craft sector in Morocco after Aid to Artisans and USAID signed contract agreement HFP-A-00-01-00023 in September of the same year. The agreement provided funds from the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) as a modification to ATA's Pan-African Enterprise Development (PAED) project implemented in southern Africa. The goal of the MAROC project was to build the trade capacity of Morocco through artisan enterprise development in order to increase employment and income opportunities for the nation's low-income population.

The project was designed to improve the production of quality market-driven products, develop entrepreneurial skills in artisan businesses and organizations, and forge market links between producers and buyers, generating business relationships for Moroccan artisans and markets for Moroccan crafts. The project's two-pronged strategy of opening the US market for existing exporters and opening local markets for rural producers shifted during the project to increase the focus on rural producers.

MAROC Objectives:

- Develop and create innovative, high-quality market-driven products that generate orders and secure a global market niche for Moroccan artisans;
- Increase market access for low-income artisans by expanding existing markets and developing new markets for local producers; promoting Morocco as a source of unique, innovative, high-quality handmade products among local, tourist, regional, and international buyers; and forging long-term business relationships between producers and buyers.
- Improve Moroccan artisans' production capacity, quality, efficiency and competitiveness; ability to understand market opportunities and realities, and negotiate local, regional, and global markets; and establish enduring business links with clients, and develop their businesses.

In order to achieve these objectives, ATA worked with micro, small, and medium-sized Moroccan artisan enterprises to enhance their competitiveness in and increase their access to local and U.S. markets. Capitalizing on existing infrastructure, particularly in urban areas, the project linked micro-enterprises in rural areas to private sector partners in urban areas to foster cooperation in production and marketing and develop mutually beneficial business linkages. Services provided encompassed business training, product development, and marketing that gave artisan producers the necessary skills to generate and maintain sales beyond the life of the project.

The project goals included a sales target for combined local and US export sales of US\$140,000 (FOB) and a client target of 500 artisans.

MEPI and USAID Programming

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) is a Presidential Initiative aimed at responding to the calls for change in the Middle East. Working under four pillars – Political, Economic, Educational and Women’s Empowerment – MEPI brings the resources, experience, and determination of the United States in an effort to support the current reform movement in the Middle East.

The MAROC project contributed to MEPI’s Economic Pillar by providing business skills training, providing professional networking in the artisan sector, strengthening the entrepreneurship and business / managerial leadership of Moroccan artisans, enhancing the trade competitiveness of craft micro, small and medium enterprises in the global economy, and promoting private sector-led job creation and economic growth in rural and urban areas of Morocco.

The MAROC project contributed to MEPI’s Women’s Pillar by providing technical assistance and targeted training / mentoring of female artisan business leaders, providing access to business and market information, resources and links to international markets and buyers, and facilitating networks among artisan leaders in the country¹.

MAROC also contributed to MEPI’s Political Pillar by fostering the institutional growth and effectiveness of artisan non-governmental organizations through support of associations, increasing their global competitiveness through technical and business training, expanding access to economic opportunities for women and men and providing them with the business and leadership skills to negotiate the business world, thereby ensuring their economic independence. The project increased the capacity of artisans and artisan associations to collaborate with each other in creating solutions for their problems and participating actively in the economic growth of the nation, and also increased private-sector development of a democratic society.

Finally ATA’s project also supported USAID’s Strategic Goal of “An Educated and Democratic Society Successfully Competing in the Global Market Place” by contributing to Strategic Objective (SO) 11 “Moroccan Economy Successfully Responding to New Opportunities and Challenges of Free Trade” and Intermediate Result IR 11.2 “New Business Opportunities Outside of Agriculture Expanded.”

MEPI and USAID Support

After conducting an initial assessment into Moroccan pottery in Safi at the request of the Al Alakhawyn University of Ifrane (AUI) in January 2004, ATA submitted a proposal to the MEPI in June of the same year for a two-year project which was funded by MEPI for US\$500,000 and administered by USAID. USAID and MEPI staff both in-country and in Washington, DC encouraged the MAROC program to increase support for the rural artisan sector during the life of the project.

Project Participants

A wide range of craft sector businesses benefited from project activities, including rural and urban artisan micro-entrepreneurs and their families, managers and employees of small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), craft associations and organizations, designers, raw material suppliers, and retail operators. This narrowed to rural artisans midway through the project. The project achieved broad

¹ 61% of project participants were women.

geographic coverage through partnership site visits facilitated by the Peace Corps in Rabat's Small Business Development Program, training and mentoring, product development exercises, regional festivals, partnerships and sales initiatives.

Final Report Objectives

The role of this final report is to:

- highlight inputs and achievements
- identify and document additional, unanticipated impacts of the project
- recognize challenges and constraints to project success
- formulate and share lessons learned during approximately 18 months of project implementation
- provide guidance for future artisan-support activities

This report presents the results of the MAROC project, the program interventions, and the rationale behind this specific set of activities designed and constantly adapted to conditions and opportunities, to achieve the best results possible. ATA hopes that this additional context may serve as a useful tool for MEPI and USAID, as well as ATA, to apply lessons learned to future work in developing Morocco's handmade industry and craft sector.

PROGRAM INPUTS & ACTIVITIES

The MAROC project strategy for a more competitive and productive craft sector in Morocco was based on the following themes, each of which translated into specific activities.

- Adding value and increasing competitiveness of Moroccan craft production by ensuring high quality products and assuring buyers of rapid turnaround, low minimum values of orders, cooperative prototype development, and reliable communication
- Building and representing a cadre of market-ready, design-savvy, competitive producers in the handmade market and home, fashion, gift and pet categories
- Developing a cohesive rural artisan sector with a high degree of interaction, collaboration, and social engagement; promoting economic growth and cultural revitalization
- Implementing a two-pronged marketing strategy that targeted the local tourist market and the international export market to the United States.

Aid to Artisans implemented a range of integrated activities comprised of product development, design and technical assistance, business training and marketing services, adaptation to the changing circumstances of artisan partner skills and readiness, available physical and human resources, and local and international market realities. Strategies and tools were consistently aligned with the original project objectives, and work plans were jointly developed and implemented by ATA's home office and Marrakech team, with input from the Embassy, USAID/Morocco, Peace Corps and other key stakeholders, and a network of skilled marketing and design consultants. The following section outlines the quantitative inputs and project activities delivered as part of the MAROC project scope, and provides a rationale for programming decisions.

Artisan Identification

Aid to Artisans identified and assessed artisan participants, and measured their capacity for increased competitiveness most intensively during the first quarter of the project but continued at a consistent pace thereafter. Artisan partners were selected through site visits, networking, partnering with

NGOs and representative institutions. Once the project gained exposure and momentum, ATA performed review sessions to respond to the overwhelming demand for services, where staff outlined project activities and criteria used for partner selection.

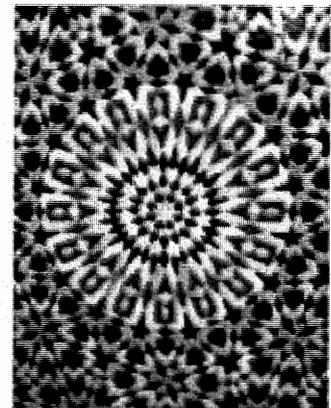
Successful capacity-building initiatives, indicated by increasingly successful businesses, were dependent upon ATA's accurate identification of true entrepreneurs in a country where innovation in the craft sector had not been historically considered as part of the rich craft tradition. The project proceeded by testing partners with a series of activities to gauge their willingness to learn and adapt through product development exercises, and invested in their potential with design input, training, and exposure to markets and learning opportunities including workshops, written materials, tradeshow scouting, and business planning.

A key component of participant identification was through the project's partnership with the Peace Corps in Rabat. Through the Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) in the Small Business Development Unit, MARAC staff was able to identify master artisans and entrepreneurial cooperatives and associations in rural areas. These groups were identified and recommended to ATA through PCVs working closely with them.

In summary, project participants included: individuals, registered businesses with two to or more employees, informal businesses, hobbyists, designers, and exporters. The project constituency was comprised of a range of people and skills from rural, urban and peri-urban areas.

Product Design and Development

For artisans to successfully sell their products, they need to make something that the market wants. Innovative, interesting product can command much higher prices for comparable skills and effort invested. For rural Moroccan artisans, the challenge of understanding the market is compounded by multiple intermediaries. These intermediaries often believe that they can keep producers for themselves if they do not share market trends. Thus, the project worked with artisans to help them adapt Morocco's rich craft tradition to current and changing market trends in the US and locally. As a long term strategy, the project provided training for particularly design-savvy individuals on how to identify, follow, and adapt market trends.



Morocco's craft heritage, such as the classic Zellige tradition, is an enormous resource to craft businesses that seek to increase sales to new markets. New products allow producers to differentiate themselves in the market.

The project provided services to artisans working in a range of media, including: ceramics, metal, textiles, wood, leather and mixed media. Early in the project, many products were not significantly different from other products on the market, and the project sought to enhance artisans' ability to: develop full collections with increased functionality and appeal, price and cost products according to capacity and markets, improve color sense, manage production efficiently, control quality, track and utilize trends, and integrate buyer response into product development.

ATA focused on blending market ideas with Morocco's diverse and strong artisan skills. The project identified opportunities in local and export markets that built on solid craft traditions and **developed and implemented 25 lines of new products (3 – 10 pieces per collection)**, providing the market with more competitive goods, buyers with more options, and artisans with broader

inspiration. In addition, ATA facilitated buyer-led design innovations with US importers to introduce new designs directly to the market with proactive sales techniques.

Product development for local markets

The project targeted the obvious market opportunity of high-end tourists, particularly foreign tourists. International design consultant Frederic Alcantara worked with artisan groups to develop new product lines for the local market through ATA's Nomadic Craft Caravan. Working with rural artisans, he developed products appropriate for the tourist market in price, size and style. He also worked directly with producers on techniques and colors and conducted several one-on-one product development trainings with artisans. At the Rose Festival in K'laat Mgouna, Mr. Alcantara began working with the Dagger Cooperative to create money clips, card holders, book marks and beads. These new lines were embraced by producer Mustapha Ait Hassou, who participated in subsequent caravan events and was successful with these new products.

Product design for the US market

Early in the project, Morocco-based Alcantara jump-started the project by orienting new producers to product development. Mr. Alcantara, who has more than a decade of international design experience, adapted existing products and selected products with the greatest market appeal. He worked with exporter Maison Méditerranéenne to prepare newly assembled collections for the SOURCES show in New York in May 2005. Working in different media: wrought iron, ceramics, leather, wood and textiles, Mr. Alcantara designed new lines and collections appropriate for the US market.

In April 2005, Ms Jane Griffiths visited Morocco to work with Mr. Alcantara to prepare product collections for the New York International Gift Fair (NYIGF) in August 2005. Together they developed two new collections: "Tribal Chic" and the "Sea Collection". Using traditional techniques, the new collections were composed of a variety of different crafts including sabra textiles, pottery, woodcarving, leather furniture and accessories, embroidery, and lanterns. Eleven artisan groups contributed to the collections and exhibited at the New York show.



Baskets ordered by Overstock

New collections and product lines were designed for each succeeding show cycle for the duration of the project.

Long-term Local Design Capacity

Realizing the need to build local design capacity, the project employed the services of Mouna Lahrabli, a local designer, to work directly with artisans during the Nomadic Craft Caravan. Initially working alongside the ATA team, Ms. Lahrabli focused on creating innovative designs specifically targeted for the tourists on the Nomadic Caravan Route. One of Ms. Lahrabli's particularly successful design is an adaptation of the traditional *jellaba* to beautiful market-appropriate jackets for tourists—a garment more accessible and appealing to international visitors. The jackets sold well at the festivals and producer Lacen Aourik was open to more design ideas – including a children's line and a higher end collection with lining on the inside of the jackets.

Additional product development came from both ATA's Home Office and Morocco staff. New product lines developed in the Home Office were created by the artisan producers after receiving trainings and directions from the field staff. Field staff followed-up with one-on-one mentoring – supervising the production until products with the highest possible quality are delivered to buyers. By using distance design, ATA was able to facilitate the marketability of Moroccan products without incurring the costs of designer travel and lodging. Furthermore, many international buyers work long-distance to develop new lines, so the project effort better prepared artisan businesses to deal with international clients.

Capacity Building & Business Training

The MAROC project engaged artisans in a range of capacity-building initiatives, strengthening business operations and improving competitiveness in the handmade industry. These efforts were directly invested in the **2,776 project participants**.

Formal Training

ATA MAROC provided formal training sessions for a variety of partners and actors in the craft value chain. The first formal training session was provided to PCVs and artisan producers in the Small Business Development program during the project launch in January 05. Modeled after ATA's renowned Market Readiness Program which takes place in New York and South Africa each year, ATA Program Director Mary Cockram and Mr. Alcantara provided a day-long training to volunteers. The workshop provided a general overview of the sector and the export market. Mr. Alcantara provided a product review with the volunteers present, working with them to suggest improvements for the sample products they brought to the workshop. **16 PCVs attended the training.**

From this initial workshop, the MAROC staff organized additional workshops for both PCVs and the rural artisans with whom they were working. Through the PCVs ATA was able to access and train rural artisans located in remote locations which was an important contribution to the success of the project.

In June 2005, Project Manager Adel Ibnoutalib facilitated a day-long workshop for mid-service PCVs in the Small Business Development program. **There were 20 PCVs at the training.** In September 2005, Project Manager Adel Ibnoutalib facilitated a day-long workshop for incoming PCVs in the Small Business Development program. **There were 28 PCVs at the training.**

Partnering with the UNDP (United Nations Development Project) ATA facilitated a day-long workshop in Marrakech for rural artisans as part of the Marrakech Film Festival caravan event. Focusing on the challenges of production, costing and pricing and design innovation, Mr. Ibnoutalib and Marketing Manager Elizabeth Paxton gave an overview of the handmade industry and presented some techniques and models for success. Nine artisans and six PCVs were present at the training.

Upon invitation from Alakhawayn University, ATA Marketing Manager Elizabeth Paxton traveled to Ifrane in March 2006 to provide training in product development and accessing new markets to female rural artisans. **There were 30 participants present for the training from rural cooperatives representing over 1000 total rural, female artisans.**

The American Chamber of Commerce in Rabat contracted ATA to provide a day-long training session for craft producers on May 31, 2006. The training focused on the US export market. **The workshop was held in Casablanca and there were 45 participants.** While not funded by the MAROC project, it complemented project activities and demonstrated demand for artisan capacity building services and a willingness to pay for such services.

International trade shows also provided a key training ground for trend research, market interaction, buyer approach, raw materials sourcing, design inspiration, and competitive costing. Representatives of Maison Méditerranéenne who participated in ATA's booth at SOURCES in New York in May 2005 were able to take advantage of the unique benefits of training at an international tradeshow by participating in ATA's SOURCES orientation at the show. Both participants expressed great satisfaction in the training and considered the workshop a valuable part of their SOURCES participation.

Finally, there were formal training workshops incorporated into all seven of the Nomadic Caravan events. ATA staff offered formal sessions to both PCVs and artisans on topics including: costing and pricing, product display, seeking new markets, sourcing raw materials, product development, basic accounting, long-term planning, quality control, and sales techniques. These sessions were particularly effective as they were held at the market place and interactions with buyers, new trends and product feedback from the market was incorporated into each session. Through the Nomadic Caravan events ATA was able to directly train artisans and master artisans in their communities. These direct beneficiaries then brought back the trainings to their fellow cooperative members, allowing ATA to provide benefits to 1,200 rural artisans.

Mentoring

Informal training sessions served as the backbone of the interaction with the artisan producers, especially rural and peri-urban producers. ATA staff provided one-on-one sessions at every opportunity and made up a significant portion of all site visits. Informal sessions also provided more opportunity for technical assistance and could address specific issues of raw materials, standardization, and costing and pricing for the producers.



Extensive individual mentoring increased the value of the Nomadic Caravans, such as this at the Agadir Music Festival

Market Access

Market Research & Strategy

Aid to Artisans developed, and continued to adapt, a marketing plan that aligned with the overall strategy for the MAROC project. ATA assessed potential partners, reviewing capacity and constraints. When sufficient potential and a desire for collaboration was established with the artisan business, ATA developed a marketing plan, determining key markets and a diversified approach for the craft enterprise. While unique to the potential of each individual business, the target market for Moroccan producers was the high-end US buyers, importers/retailers, as well as entry into the pet accessories industry.

Presenting Moroccan craft products to the market required a range of preparatory tasks, since most producers had not been directly exposed to the market or had materials appropriate for the US market. ATA provided intensive guidance on pricing and costing procedures, quality control, product photography, preparation of pricelists and line sheets, mentoring on promotional material development, and the development of buyer services.

Local Marketing

The local market provides the best forum for building rural artisan capacity for the export market, and this was demonstrated through the success of the Nomadic Craft Caravan. The Caravan aimed at facilitating the direct entrance of skilled rural artisans into the market. In partnership with the Peace Corps in Rabat, ATA worked with local government representatives to secure exhibition stands during the most renowned local festivals. Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) in the Small

Business Development Program identified skilled artisans among the groups with which they work. The PCVs then worked with ATA to provide training to the artisans before, during, and after the fair. Participating artisans reported increased incomes and gained first hand experience in navigating the global market-place through their interaction with the tourists.

The Nomadic Craft Caravan concept debuted in May 2005 at the Rose Festival in K'laat M'gouna. Due to the success of the festival and the interest generated by the participation artisans, the Nomadic Caravan became an important component of MAROC's local market activities.

The table below summarizes Nomadic Caravan activities for the project period.



ATA's Nomadic Caravans were highly sought after sales events; producers made immediate sales, wholesale contacts for future business, and links to other artisans for information about additional sales venues.

Table 1

Caravan Event	Sales		Artisans Present		Total Artisan Benefited ²
	Dirhams (dh)	US Dollars (\$)	Male	Female	
Klaat M'gouna Rose Festival (May 6-9 2005)	45, 223 dh	\$5448	63	8	103
Agadir Music Festival (July 2-9 2005)	66, 354 dh	\$7806	13	12	182
Imilchil Wedding Festival (August 24-28 2005)	54, 644 dh	\$6139	8	20	239
Marrakech Film Festival (November 10-19 2005)	39, 490 dh	\$4339	5	6	150
Rabat Holiday Craft Fair (December 10 2005)	38, 458 dh	\$4226	3	8	195
M'hammid Festival of Nomades (March 24-25 2006)	2,478 dh	\$275	8	8	222
Spring Time in Marrakech (March 24-April 1 2006)	72,966 dh	\$8107	5	16	574
Total	319,613 dh	\$36,343			1200

As part of creating sustainable market links for artisan producers, ATA organized guided market tours during the caravan where rural artisans visited owners of hotels, restaurants and lounges to find buyers interested in developing long-lasting relationships. This was done at four of the seven

² Total artisans benefited includes all members of participating groups, in addition to individuals present. Due to the fact that several groups participated in the Caravan multiple times, the total number of artisans—1,200—is less than the sum.

Caravan events. At the Agadir Music Festival, the Khenifra Cooperative sold all their products to hotel chain Club Med and the relationship with Club Med has continued since. Currently, there is a budding relationship between high-end guest house Jnane Tamsna and weavers in Khenifra. With Peace Corps Volunteers a key part of this activity, and aware of their short stay in the country, they are working to ensure that their Moroccan counterparts are equipped to conduct current and future business on their own.

US Market

Aid to Artisans facilitated 13 Moroccan artisan businesses participation at three US trade shows. ATA facilitated the logistics, display and promotion of products in the Handmade section of the New York International Gift Fair (NYIGF), leveraging the organization's reputation and persistent presence at the show for the benefit of the MAROC project. MAROC also introduced Maison Méditerranéenne, an SME, to FOB shows in the US by facilitating their participation in the SOURCES tradeshow in New York in May 2005.

This process allowed ATA to conduct valuable trainings and introduce these producers to the export market for the very first time. Through the NYIGF ATA facilitates **US\$13,335 FOB (US retail equivalent of US \$80,000)** in total sales for the producers (this includes orders and samples). Also the SOURCES show led Worldstock to visit Maison Méditerranéenne in Marrakech (representing approximately 250 artisans), and place an order for a container of **US \$34,000 FOB (US retail equivalent of US \$200,000)**. Worldstock placed a subsequent **US\$800 FOB (US retail equivalent of US \$4,800)** sample order for basket samples with Vanniers Atlas and is planning to reorder a much larger quantity of baskets.

ATA Marketing Representatives also scouted five shows on behalf of MAROC project participants, seeking new importer/wholesaler/retailer contacts that would be appropriate for Moroccan producer capacities. Over the course of the project, these shows included these specialized venues:

- Accessories Show (New York)
- International Contemporary Furniture Show (New York)
- High Point International Home Furnishings Market (North Carolina)
- Chicago Pet Show
- California Gift Show

To follow up on initial contacts made at tradeshow, ATA's Marketing team, including two US sales representatives, Hartford-based staff and Morocco-based staff, continued communications with buyers to gather feedback regarding interest in sample purchases, orders and visits to the country. Due to its global portfolio and long history in the industry, ATA can often gain the attention of, and offer a range of sourcing options to, small, medium, and large importers (wholesale, retail and catalog companies). ATA hosts networking events to build a community of interested importers, sponsors Trade Network gatherings and provides client log-ins to proprietary ATA webpages that detail recently developed products available for importer representation. This



provided an opportunity for leatherworkers to sell pet collars. Additional sales are expected post-project for this successful market link.



MAROC team with NYIGF orders – showing new designs with new colors which were well received by the market

led to nine new buyer leads, one of whom (Hungersite) visited Morocco in June, 2006 on an ATA-sponsored buyer visit.

Proactive follow-up was key to initiating relationships between buyers and Moroccan producers and in turn, to supporting these groups as they solidified client relationships. Specifically, ATA staff Jane Griffiths and Barbara Czuprynski, and Sales Representatives Lori Grey and Kathy Ross were in constant communication with in-country staff, producer-exporters and the buyers themselves, to facilitate relationship building.

Field staff time and expertise during this process was key to marketing successes - their ability to follow-up directly with artisans, interpret buyer requests, offer alternatives, and motivate businesses who lacked a proactive nature was essential to ATA marketing efforts. MAROC Marketing Manager and Field Coordinator supplied valuable on-site review of order fulfillment to ensure quality control, timely communication, accuracy in documentation, and correct shipping. MAROC's staff is also credited with identifying and developing international buyers outside the realm of ATA home office/sales staff, hosting buyers, facilitating custom orders, and interpreting product design input.

With project activities winding down, ATA transferred buyer relationship management directly to exporters like Maison Méditerranéenne and to local sourcing agents, who facilitated the production and shipment of larger orders through local shippers and packers.

Ongoing sales representation activities included:

- Researching new clients and target markets appropriate for MAROC participants through scouting shows, developing industry liaisons, and ATA's Trade Network
- Compiling and presenting product portfolios and producer capacities to buyers
- Requesting buyer-designed samples, pricing, shipping, and production information to be delivered to potential buyers
- Soliciting buyer feedback regarding Moroccan product samples
- Inquiring about progress (to producers) on purchase order fulfillment, sales results, and reorder possibilities
- Maintaining records of buyer interaction, interests, and results
- Training and providing guidance for new importers or importers working with handmade production for the first time

As a result of these combined marketing inputs, the MAROC project garnered orders from 14 buyers and resulted in sales of approximately US\$120,000 FOB³ and an estimated US\$100,000 FOB expected in the twelve months after project ends. Export sales often take five to twelve months to realize, and result from the pursuit and cultivation of a much larger number of buyer leads. Four buyers placed repeat orders during the life of the project, expressing their satisfaction with product and services by placing successive orders with Moroccan craft producers. Two others are expected to place additional orders in the next twelve months.

Buyer visits are the single most effective way to start a commercial relationship, but ATA's experience show that the average buyer needs a year to plan a trip to a new country. The two-year time frame of the made it difficult to finalize trips. However, five buyers visited during the project time without ATA subsidizing the trips. Boutic Ethic (small home accessories), Mint Tea (various home accessories), Worldstock (small pieces of wood and leather furniture), Caluco Furniture (tile

³ In the US, these products will retail for more than US\$500,000 dollars.

table tops) and Alkina (fashion accessories).⁴ All buyer visits were coordinated by ATA field staff, and their experiences were enhanced by easy access to detailed information for a wide range of production possibilities also assistance in logistical arrangements and translation was necessary. With project activities winding down, ATA transferred buyer relationship managers directly to exporters like Maison Méditerranéenne and to local sourcing agents, who facilitated the production and shipment of larger orders. In June 2006, ATA Morocco also sponsored the visit of Hunger Site.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

The MAROC project provided a range of integrated activities to a broad array of project partners, as detailed above. Updated indicators for the project period are documented in the table below.

Table 2

Indicator	Result
Total number of artisans/employees benefited	2,776
Artisan enterprises benefited	65
Percentage of female artisans	61%
Percentage of male artisans	39%
New product lines	25
US buyers placing orders	10
Non-US buyers placing orders	4
Total export sales	US\$119,719 FOB or US \$720,000 at US retail
Local sales, including Nomadic Caravans	US\$40,781
Total Sales	US\$160,500 (FOB); ≈US \$950,000

In terms of geographic scope, the MAROC project provided support for urban, peri-urban and rural artisans in the following areas: Marrakech, Tameslough, Safi, Imilchil, Essouaira, and K'laat M'gouna.

Long-term Impact

Although the MAROC project was implemented over a period of 18 months, behavioral changes due to training, livelihoods improvement and changes in the artisan sector have already demonstrated the long-term impacts of this project. Abdelaati Nejar a weaver in Tameslough has not only expanded his business, but employed the services of his sister who majored in English in College to manage the administrative aspect of the business and provide customer services to his new US buyers. The buyer links were made through Abdelaati's products showing at the ATA booth at the August 2005 and January 2006 New York International Gift Fair.

Family Economy: MAROC generated essential income for many unemployed and underemployed individuals who reported having little or no alternative sources of income. Growing sales provided for family resources, expanding opportunities and growing well-being.

Confidence & Capability: Artisans developed a broad range of business skills which they felt increasingly capable of using both in their craft businesses and in other pursuits. For example, two rural women producer groups (from Sefrou and Tameslough) participated in a textiles show in

⁴ In addition to the buyers mentioned in the text, ATA board member Jonathan Williams' import company, Tesoros, also visited Morocco and placed repeat orders. However, those numbers are not included in the indicators for the project. Project staff provided the same level of support to Tesoros as to other buyers.

Burkina Faso in June 2006. While sales were minimal, the artisans were able to employ negotiating, customer service, and other skills they had gained through their participation in the Nomadic Craft Caravan to better prepare them to engage the buyers at the show. The producer groups came back clearly articulating the price points at the show, buyer expectations and market trends.

Market Readiness/Exposure: Artisans have cultivated an increasingly realistic understanding of competition and the demands of the global market, making them more serious contenders and contributors to the national economy.

Design Consciousness: The MAROC project heightened awareness of marketable design – a key component in product salability. Artisan partners participated in product development and design workshops and internalized the need for continued and innovative design in production. ATA's work was noted in *MAROC Soir*, highlighting the new contemporary designs of the products.



Maroc Soir Article

Association Strengthening: Artisan associations and cooperatives have been bolstered by MAROC's initiatives. Rural artisan members of associations have realized the need for associations to provide more market-oriented services to members, and have begun discussions on improving their services. Through collaboration at the Nomadic Caravan, cooperatives and associations from different regions began sharing experiences, techniques, and information, thereby creating a stronger national artisan network.

MANAGEMENT

The Market Access, Rural Outreach and Craft (MAROC) project was implemented by Aid to Artisans, a US-based NGO with 30 years' experience in artisan enterprise development in emerging markets. ATA's US-based Program, Marketing, Finance and Administration and Executive staff were responsible for program design, managing the development of marketing strategies (including product design and sales activities), and providing market-based feedback to participating enterprises throughout project implementation. Through communication and periodic visits to Morocco, ATA's home office staff provided ongoing guidance with respect to project finances and administration, as well as programmatic management and oversight.

Specifically, ATA's home office staff conducted oversight visits during the course of the project, as follows:

- In January 2005 ATA Program Director Mary Cockram and Program Assistant Laurel Dudley traveled to Morocco to launch the project. Initial project set-up activities began on the trip included registration, opening bank account, identifying office facilities, assessing potential artisan partners and other stakeholders, and hiring of in-country staff.
- In April 2005, ATA Vice President for Marketing Jane Griffiths traveled to the country to finalize selection of exporters for the SOURCES show in May 2005, visit artisan producers, and begin product development and design for the August 2005 NYIGF.
- In June 2005, Program Officer Elikem Tomety Archer visited the country to assess the progress on the ground and to meet with partners.
- In March 2006, Senior Program Director Lane Pollack was also in the country to assist in-country staff with preparations for close out.

To promote learning and better prepare the MAROC staff to support the Moroccan craft sector, MAROC staff also traveled to the US.

- In May 2005, Adel Ibnoutalib attended the SOURCES Trade Show in New York. Using the trip to complete his orientation, Mr. Ibnoutalib also spent a week in the ATA Home Office in Hartford. Finally, he joined two other Country Project Leaders from Peru and Haiti to visit a model ATA project in El Salvador.
- In August 2005, Ms. Elizabeth Paxton participated in ATA's Market Readiness Program held in New York City at the same time as the New York International Gift Fair.
- In March 2006, Mr. Ibnoutalib visited the Home Office to work with Home Office staff especially the Finance and Administration staff to finalize administrative close out tasks.

Project Closeout

In the final months of the MAROC project, ATA in-country and US-based staff completed the administrative process of project closeout, including:

- Meeting with partners and producer groups to discuss ideas for sector-level strategies based on progress made during the MAROC project
- Completing a detailed inventory of project equipment
- Reconciling the MAROC bank account, preparing and reviewing final financial statements from project operations
- Final payment to project staff and consultants
- Conducting project closeout meeting and final project debrief meetings with appropriate USAID and MEPI staff in Morocco
- Completing staff debriefs and exit interviews
- Preparing project documentation for archiving, and shipping key documents to ATA's US offices
- Conferring with ATA's legal counsel to determine steps for terminating ATA's registration process and bank account;

The majority of equipment and materials remaining from the MAROC project are in storage, as outlined in the distribution plan that was submitted in April 2006. The plan suggests the holding of the equipment until September 2006 until the end of the contract, and the distribution of the equipment to two local artisan associations in the event that ATA does not receive any US government funding after September 2006 to continue operations in Morocco.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

Several programmatic themes and particular management strategies contributed to MAROC's successes, including:

Local training – ATA successfully adapted the international Market Readiness Program trainings for a local audience and for different skill levels, and efficiently screened artisan partners for appropriate inputs. The business management information was generally new and very well received. Artisans and Peace Corps Volunteers who participated in the training expressed satisfaction with the quality of the materials and the information presented.

Partnership with Peace Corps – This partnership was mutually beneficial to artisan communities, the Peace Corps, and ATA. ATA provided training, tools, and information to Volunteers working with

artisan associations and cooperatives, which enabled Volunteers to be more effective, artisans to create more marketable products and sell more, and ATA to have a broader and deeper reach.

Proactive buyer lead follow-up - Over the medium term, focused marketing efforts generated substantial buyer interest, both in immediate orders and in long-term relationships that are expected to continue well past the life of the project. In addition to the **total project sales of approximately US \$160,000 FOB (US \$950, 000 retail), an estimated US \$100, 000 FOB is expected through repeat orders in the year immediately following the end of the project.**

Local marketing – ATA identified the potential of the local market and adapted project activities to increase activities dramatically. The Nomadic Craft Caravan responded to the need for a craft-focused event. These effective investments in festivals initiated a creative new way of partnering with PCVs in artisan selection, while ATA focused on display, merchandising, and design. The involvement of the PCVs in this activity was key in ATA's ability to benefit a large number of rural artisans due to the location of the volunteers in the rural areas. The Nomadic Caravan resulted in local market meeting demand as rural artisan producers who were initially unaware of the potential for sales at festivals, are now keenly aware of the opportunities and are better able to take advantage of them – creating effective sources of market intelligence for the artisans.

LESSONS LEARNED & REMAINING NEEDS

ATA's continued success in market development is driven by an internal commitment to learning and adapting program design from experience. This section outlines the major lessons learned from the MAROC's project and recommendations for future.

Participant Selection: ATA employs a producer assessment form in evaluating the potential project participants, but in an effort to get the project started quickly, these established selection criteria were not followed carefully. Subsequently, some producers were chosen for the attractiveness of their products without adequate consideration for their ability to sustain potential market links. As result, the project team spent considerable time setting expectations for collaboration and partnership, goal setting, and follow up.

Participant Training: Trainings during the Nomadic Caravan were considered successful by artisans and PCVs who were the target audience. Due to the short duration of the project there was a lack of formal training for exporters which was a missed opportunity due to the great potential for them to easily access the US market with limited training and US market information. Future projects should include formal exporter training modeled on ATA's New York and South Africa Market Readiness Program. Appropriate exporters should also be encouraged to attend these programs as they create invaluable exposure to the market. This is especially important for Morocco's advancement into the US market, as despite the experience of large exporters like Maison Méditerranéenne in the European market, ATA found there to be a surprising lack of preparedness for meeting buyer expectations in the US market.

Export Activities: The MAROC project concentrated attention on a relatively small number of producer groups due to the donor's preference to focus exclusively on rural producers. In a country with literally millions of artisans, a sector-wide intervention working directly with artisans would require a long time horizon and a substantial budget to make a significant impact. Focusing almost exclusively on producers and not exporters reduced the ability of some producers to access higher value markets due to lack of linkages to actors (like exporters) in those markets.

Lead-Free Pottery: Moroccan pottery is rich in intricate traditional design which is appealing to the local market. Design input using the same techniques have also produced contemporary products that have also been well received in the international market⁵. One constraint to meeting this market demand is the high incidence of lead-glazes in Morocco, making the products unsafe for use on products which will contain food, thereby limiting the range of possible products and causing considerable risk to potters' health. To address this constraint, Moroccan ceramicists can adapt available lead-free technology which was implemented by ATA and its Mexican partners in a successful campaign to advocate change in Mexico.

Strengthening the local distribution channel: Rural producers in Morocco have limited access to the market due to the logistical difficulty in accessing the market, and the lack of market knowledge needed to effectively engage high-end buyers locally and internationally. Access to higher value markets are currently through middlemen who have limited trust with the rural producers. As a result, there is an opportunity to develop "sourcing agents" who have the ability (both logistically and financially) to serve as 'brokers' in the market. Buyers both locally and internationally have indicated a willingness to pay for the services of such agents who will transfer market information between rural producers and buyers, oversee production quality, and ensure timely delivery of products. This model will create a win-win relationship as rural producers will be better able to access higher value markets thereby increasing their incomes, buyers will be receiving quality products on time, and sourcing agents will be receiving payments for their services.

⁵ Newly designed pottery in vibrant contemporary colors was on high demand by buyers at the ATA booth at the August 05 and January 06 New York International Gift Fair.



SUCCESS STORY

Rural Weavers Gain Market Access



Photo by Frederic Alcantara

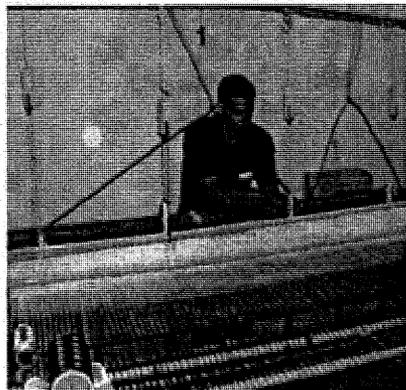


Photo by Elbert Hardeman

With the help of Aid to Artisans, Abdelati Nejar has gone from rural artisan to international exporter in just 5 months. Abdelati has participated in both local and international craft fairs earning a total of \$4459.

Abdelati Nejar was born in 1959 in Tamslouht, Morocco, a small town near Marrakech, known for its pottery and textiles. He became a weaver's apprentice at age 7 and at age 21 he began wholesaling his weavings to bazaars in Marrakech. However, as tourist traffic slowed, the medina shops began placing more emphasis on price rather than quality. In the 1990's the competition became fierce and Abdelati lost the vast majority of his sales outlets.

Abdelati began working with non-profit Aid to Artisans in May 2005 in order to gain access to new markets in both Morocco and the US. Abdelati has participated in all five Nomadic Craft Caravan events organized by Aid to Artisans in Morocco. Through the Caravan, Abdelati has accessed valuable trainings as well as sales outlets. Abdelati's revenue from the Nomadic Craft Caravan events totaled \$2754 (13 times his average monthly revenue).

At the Caravan events, Aid to Artisans (ATA) quickly recognized Abdelati's superior quality and leadership skills, and began to prepare him for the export market. Abdelati's weavings made their US debut at the New York International Gift Fair in August 2005. Abdelati's orders totaled \$1,705, and accounted for 50% of ATA's Morocco sales. Abdelati filled and shipped the NY orders at the end of October. Abdelati's product will be shown again at the next New York International Gift Fair in January 2006.

Abdelati has big plans for his weavings and the export market. He remains in close contact with the ATA Morocco team and receives production and marketing guidance on a regular basis. Abdelati has already hired a family member as a sales representative and he plans to expand his production line by hiring other local weavers in Tamslouht. With the help of Aid to Artisans Morocco, Abdelati is well on his way to becoming an international exporter!



SUCCESS STORY

Transforming Slippers into Dog Collars:

ATA Makes the Link and Provides Market Driven Product Development



Photo by Christine Labrenz

handmade in morocco for
gimmepawz

Aid to Artisans worked closely with Gimmepawz and Ait Taleb to create over 30 prototypes of dog collars. The prototypes were such a success in Chicago that Ait Taleb now fills orders of 150 pieces per month.

Aid to Artisans provides artisans of Morocco with market driven product development, so when San Francisco importer Gimmepawz contacted ATA looking for a dog collar producer, ATA took on the challenge with vigor.

Since June, Aid to Artisans has been working closely with Marrakech leather slipper producer Ahmed Ait Taleb to create prototypes of dog collars for Gimmepawz. "I wanted the collars to have a vintage look while incorporating the stylish rivets, grommets and antique coins that are in all of the fashion magazines," says Christine Labrenz of Gimmepawz.

ATA facilitated communication between Ait Taleb and Labrenz to create over 30 prototypes of dog collars and leashes. Gimmepawz successfully introduced the line in October at the HH Backer Pet Industry Trade Show in Chicago. In addition to the overwhelming response to the dog collars, Gimmepawz customers are now clamoring for human belts to match their dog collars!

According to Labrenz, "ATA Morocco took on a real challenge in developing a product line for a market that its artisans were not yet familiar with. It was a steep learning curve, but both Ait Taleb and ATA met and exceeded our expectations. We see a long future developing our line as a result of ATA's assistance."

Since October, Gimmepawz has been placing regular monthly orders for dog collars totaling \$2,306. Gimmepawz plans to continue to work with ATA and Moroccan artisans to introduce new pet products as well as home furnishings and also women's accessories. ATA Morocco looks forward to hosting Labrenz and her partner for a buyer visit in March 2006.



USAID | MOROCCO
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

aid to
artisans
From Maker to Market

SUCCESS STORY

From Buttons to Burkina Faso: The Cerises Cooperative's Journey to Success

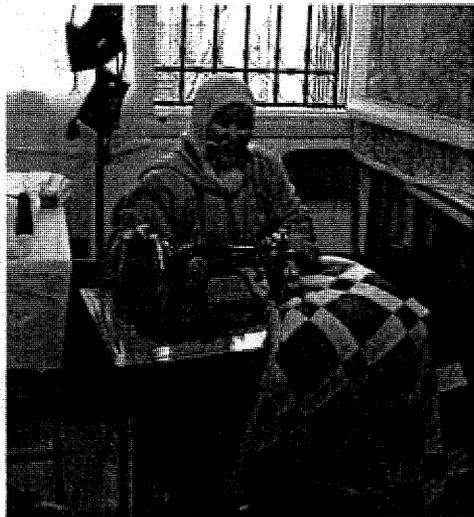


Photo by: Gregg Johnson

Cerises President Amina Yabiss sews one of the cooperative's trademark quilts with a machine purchased through an ATA small grant.

The Cerises women's button cooperative began in 2000 with 20 members. The cooperative is located in Sefrou (30 km from Fez) and began as a means for homebound women to market their *jellabah* buttons without the intervention of costly intermediaries. Over the years the women of Cerises have helped over 500 women of the Sefrou area to market their buttons. Furthermore, the cooperative has developed a host of other sewn products including pillows, purses, scarves and quilts adorned with the buttons of Sefrou.

Cerises currently has 21 cooperative members and attributes its success to strong leadership as well as the assistance it has received from international organizations such as Peace Corps and Aid to Artisans. Cerises' president Amina Yabis is a driving force for the cooperative working closely with Peace Corps volunteers for the past 6 years to develop and market new products. Amina Yabis was recently nominated as one of the five *Khmissa* candidates in the business category (the *Khmissa* award recognizes female pillars of the community).

Peace Corps volunteer Gregg Johnson has been assisting the Cerises cooperative since 2003. Johnson has aided Cerises in attaining two small grants from Aid to Artisans in order to purchase sewing machines and raw materials such as bulk cloth. Johnson states, "My greatest satisfaction has come from seeing how the cooperative has progressed since they started working with Aid to Artisans. Through ATA contacts, Cerises has successfully begun to export to the US on a small scale. Cerises has also benefited from valuable trainings, and has developed new products and a new professional attitude."

Cerises is currently seeking out new sales opportunities for their the cooperative's products. Through ATA, Cerises has been in contact with Moroccan exporters and has produced some samples of children quilts. Cerises has also participated in numerous craft fairs both in Morocco and abroad including the Nomadic Craft Caravan event and training organized by ATA at the Rabat American School. The cooperative will make its next appearance in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso from June 8-10. at the "Fibers and Material from Africa: Fashion through Fair Trade" show. The all expense paid exhibition will offer training, a sales outlet and a wonderful networking opportunity for the cooperative and its 500 plus beneficiaries.



USAID | MOROCCO

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

SUCCESS STORY

Aid To Artisans Offers Training and Market Access to Rural Artisans Through the Nomadic Craft Fair Caravan



Photo by: Andy Allen

USER INSTRUCTIONS:
TO ACCESS OR MODIFY THE ITEMS
IN THIS SIDEBAR, THE HEADLINE,
OR THE COUNTRY LOCKUP AT THE
TOP OF THIS PAGE, MODIFY THIS
PAGE'S HEADER.

Aid to Artisans helps rural artisans to access local markets through the Nomadic Craft Caravan. The Caravan has participated in 3 crafts fairs thus far grossing just under \$19,000 in sales.

The Nomadic Craft Fair Caravan made its first appearance at the Rose Festival in Klaat Megouna in May 2005. On a sunny spring morning, 15 rural artisans set up their wares in a large tent and began Aid to Artisan's (ATA) crash course in marketing. Three days later, the artisans brought home a total of \$5,357. Nearly all of the artisans present represented larger cooperatives extending ATA's reach to 103 total rural artisans.

ATA further expanded its reach and impact through the organization of two subsequent craft fairs in Agadir and Imichil. The Agadir festival in July '05 offered direct market access to 26 artisans (182 total artisans) and generated \$7540 in sales revenues. The Imichil craft festival in August '05 offered direct market access to 34 artisans (239 total artisans) and produced sales of \$6067.

The Nomadic Craft Fair Caravan's participants are rural artisans who are selected with the help of Peace Corps Volunteers in Morocco. The profile of the most recent participant list includes: 70% women and 30% men. There are also two associations working with handicapped artisans accounting for 32% of the total beneficiaries. Through the Nomadic Craft Caravan, ATA has helped rural artisans to earn a total of \$18,964.

At the craft fair events, ATA conducts onsite trainings for both the rural artisans and the Peace Corps volunteers. Training topics include: product display, sales techniques, product development, costing and pricing, and future planning. ATA also offers one on one consulting to artisans and advice on seeking out additional sales outlets. The solidarity and teamwork among the participants provide the building blocks for the caravan to keep on trekking for years to come.



USAID | MOROCCO
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

aid to artisans
From Maker to Market

SUCCESS STORY

Safi Ceramist Touriya Bouteness gains access to International Markets

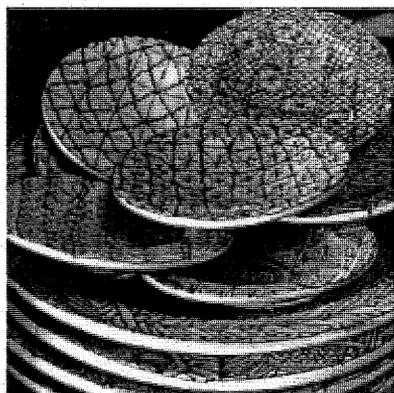


Photo by Frederic Alcantara

Aid to Artisans is helping Touriya Bouteness of Safi to export her henna decorated pottery. Touriya has been very successful and just filled an order for 254 pieces destined for the US and Italy.

Many of the pottery shops in Safi look alike. The potters of Safi copy each other's successful designs as a means of guaranteeing sales. However, Touriya Bouteness is challenging the mundane by producing new styles and designs using henna.

Touriya Bouteness was born and raised in Safi, a fishing port on the Atlantic coast of Morocco known for its pottery and ceramics. After an eight year training in her brother's shop, she opened her own store in 2003. She began experimenting with henna as an embellishment to traditional Safi, but has had trouble finding a market for her creations.

Touriya began working with Aid to Artisans in April 2005 in order to export her crafts. Aid to Artisans showed Touriya's henna pottery at the New York International Gift Fair in August 2005. The products received substantial attention and subsequent orders for 74 pieces. Aid to Artisans also sent photos and pricing of Touriya's henna pottery to other importers. In response, a buyer in Italy immediately placed an order for 180 pieces. The combined orders represent \$932 in sales, five times Touriya's average monthly income.

Touriya shipped both orders in October and is busy preparing samples for the next New York International Gift Fair. The Aid to Artisans Morocco team remains in close contact with Touriya, guiding and encouraging her in the establishment of her new export business.