

- PN-ACK-582



New Ideas for Export Development Aid, Inc.

REPORT

U.S. MARKET LINKAGES AND CAPACITY BUILDING
FOR
MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES
IN THE
GARMENT & ACCESSORIES, HOME FURNISHINGS & HANDICRAFT
INDUSTRIES
OF
BENIN

IN SUPPORT OF
USAID STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

PREPARED FOR
AFRICA OFFICE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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SUBJECT AWARD NO. AOT-G-00-00-00032-00

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. ACTIVITIES

The program consisted of three main components.

1. Technical assistance

The team provided short-term technical assistance to a cross section of producers for the development of innovative samples with handcrafted inputs. Training was provided through well-attended seminars and workshops on product and market development.

2. Dissemination of information

The team's activities were repeatedly covered by newspapers, television, and radio.

3. U.S. market linkages

NIEDA presented the new samples – as well as samples presently handcrafted in Benin – in New York to top product experts and decision makers of firms involved in the design, production and marketing of top quality home furnishings, apparel and accessories.

These companies were:

Takashimaya New York, Inc., Saks Fifth Avenue, Neiman Marcus, Angela Cummings Fine Jewelry, Inc., The MuseumCompany.com, Chado, Kim Seybert, Kim Unger New York, Donghia Furniture/Textiles.

B. MARKET EVALUATION

1. Apparel with handcrafted inputs

There is a market niche for garments made with handcrafted inputs, such as hand painting, hand dying with natural and chemical dyes, and appliqué work.

2. Handcrafted accessories

- a. Raffia products – The overall quality of hand weaving is fairly good – excellent in the case of the Centre Béninois de Métiers Traditionnels.
- b. Handcrafted silver jewelry – Given their quality/price ratio, these items could not compete successfully with hand made jewelry produced in other countries.

3. Textile home furnishings with handcrafted inputs

- a. Hand painting – Distinctive hand painted fabrics can provide apparel and home furnishings producers with a competitive advantage over products made with mill made fabric, especially with the use of natural dyes.
- b. Appliqué work – With more innovative designs, this skill could be applied to home furnishings and apparel, targeted to the better quality market.
- c. Hand weaving – Hand woven fabrics can be used only for small home furnishings and fashion accessories, since the majority of looms are only 45 to 60 centimeters wide.
- d. Batik and tie-dye – The worldwide utilization of such techniques for mass products precludes acceptance by the top of the market.

4. Handcrafted decorative items

- a. Woodcarvings – The quality market could offer a profitable niche for well-finished items, given the number of skilled artisans, and the variety of prized wood available, domestic and imported.
- b. Brass items – Poor quality of finish and sameness of designs are weaknesses of this product group.

C. RESULTS**1. Training**

Participation and interest in NIEDA seminars and workshops were considerable. The positive comments in the evaluation form, distributed by NIEDA, indicated their impact.

2. Market linkages

The handcrafted products presented have attracted, as of now, the interest of the following companies:

a. *Donghia*

This firm ordered samples from Tossivi in conjunction with Médard Hantan, Agnès Hekpazo Creation, and Sculpture Beau Bois. They also requested photos of René Gnahoui's paintings.

b. *Kim Seybert*

This company is interested in developing samples with Tossivi in conjunction with Médard Hantan, Agnès Hekpazo Creation, and Sculpture Beau Bois.

Meetings with other companies are scheduled for the end of January 2001.

I. PREFACE

A. CURRENT ATRIP ACTIVITY (Grant # AOT-G-00-00-00032-00)

On January 2001, NIEDA completed implementation of a one-year project whose objectives were to establish U.S. market linkages and to build capacity for handicraft producers in South Africa, Madagascar, Ghana, and Benin. Total award amount: \$399,914.

B. OBJECTIVES

The program consisted of three main components.

1. U.S. market access component

The objective was to establish business linkages between SMMEs and U.S. firms, based in New York.

2. Technical assistance component

The objective was to improve SMMEs productivity, competitiveness and capacity utilization through:

- a. Short-term technical assistance, in product development and quality upgrade, to a cross section of enterprises engaged in the production of handcrafted textile products and decorative items;
- b. Training on quality, design, pricing, promotion and marketing (two workshops and two seminars).

3. Dissemination of information

The objective was to publicize USAID support of SMMEs in Benin through:

- a. Press coverage of the team's in-country activities;
- b. Press kits prepared and mailed from New York to Benin's press highlighting results, upon completion of the NIEDA report.

C. IN-COUNTRY ACTIVITIES

The NIEDA team¹ carried out its tasks from:

- October 19 through November 24, 2000 (di Grandi and Selvi)
- October 27 through November 24, 2000 (Bianco)

1. Meetings

- Harry Lightfoot, Sr., Mission Director, USAID/Benin²;
- Pascal Zinzindohoue, USAID/Benin;
- Ruben Johnson, USAID/Benin;

¹ The NIEDA team was composed of:
Gino di Grandi, President – product and market development expert
Aldo Selvi, Vice President – buying behavior and product evaluation expert
Pietro Bianco, Chief – garment and accessories production specialist and stylist

² The USAID/Benin Mission signaled NIEDA concluding seminar/product presentation to several newspapers, which covered the event.

- Wassi Mouftaou, President, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Benin (CCIB);
- Chakirou Tidjani, General Secretary, CCIB;
- Amzat Nourou-Deen Olatoude, Cabinet du Président, CCIB;
- Noël Dossou-Yovo, Directeur Adjoint de Cabinet, Ministère du Commerce, de l'Artisanat et du Tourisme du Bénin³;
- Florentin Monotte, Director, Ministère de l'Industrie, Petites et Moyennes Entreprises (DPME);
- Christian Segbo, Deputy Director, Centre Béninois du Commerce Extérieur (CBCE);
- Jeanne-marie Houessou, Directrice Adjointe, Direction Nationale de l'Artisanat;
- Sègnon Quenum, Observatoire des Opportunités d'Affaires du Bénin, Ministère du Commerce, de l'Artisanat et du Tourisme;
- Gisèle Allide, Deputy Director⁴, Centre de Promotion de l'Artisanat (CPA), Ministère du Commerce, de l'Artisanat et du Tourisme;
- Felix Chabi, Chef Service Animation Groupement, CPA;
- Yvon Dedegbe, CPA;
- Beverly Ott, Founder and Executive Director, Echange pour l'Organisation et la Promotion des Petits Entrepreneurs (ECHOPPE);
- Hortense da Matha, Chef Service Commercial, Complexe Textile du Bénin (COTEB);
- Augustin Houénouvo, Président, Coopérative du Meuble;
- Gilbert Degila, Chef Service Commercial, Coopérative du Meuble.

Notwithstanding repeated requests, the NIEDA team could not meet with the general managers of:

- Société Béninoise de Textile (SOBETEX)
- Complexe Textile du Bénin (COTEB).

2. Visits

a. *Handicraft producers and/or retailers*

The team visited handicraft producers and retailers for an overview of the artisanal sector. These enterprises were:

- Espace Tissage Plus – textile and raffia hand weaving
- La Finesse – textile hand weaving
- Centre Béninois de Métiers Traditionnels – raffia hand weaving
- Abesil Teinture – batik fabrics
- Atelier de Batik “Saint Esprit” – batik home furnishings
- Floride – batik home furnishings and apparel
- Sculpture Beau Bois – wood carvings
- Asiebe – wood carvings
- Atelum – lamps
- Avadra Gabin – brass items

³ Mr. Dossou-Yovo took an active interest in NIEDA activities, and signaled NIEDA mission to a number of Government officials.

⁴ Ms. Allide was attending a crafts fair in Burkina Faso for the first three weeks of the NIEDA mission, and the CPA officials in charge were not as involved as expected.

- Elégance Art – home furnishings, apparel, gift items and jewelry
 - La Couronne d' Or – home furnishings, gift items and jewelry
 - Artisans du Soleil – home furnishings and gift items
 - Hermitage Boutique – home furnishings, gift items and jewelry
 - Rencontre 94 – small leather goods and handicrafts
 - Agnele's Arts (CPA) – handicrafts
 - Rufine C.A. Béhanzin (CPA) – apparel and handicrafts
 - Pierre Aguessi-Vognon (CPA) – handicrafts
 - Mamadou El-Hadj (CPA) – jewelry
 - Léger Ange Acacha (CPA) – handicrafts
 - Anani Claude Adanou (CPA) – handicrafts
 - Marie Onidje, (CPA) – handicrafts
 - Abdoul Baraze (CPA) – handicrafts
 - René Donvide (CPA) – handicrafts
 - Francois Yemadje (CPA) – handicrafts
 - Hilaire Assgbahou (CPA) – hand weaving
 - Médard Hantan (CPA) – appliqué items
 - Jacob Adonon (CPA) – hand weaving
 - Da Silva Hooper (CPA) – handicrafts
 - Thiam Abdoulaye (CPA) – handicrafts
 - Juliette Bessou (CPA) – handicrafts
 - Aguiar Loko (CPA) – handicrafts
 - Paule De Meideros (CPA) – handicrafts
 - Cheick Wathie (CPA) – handicrafts
- b. *Apparel producers*
- Tossivi – apparel
 - Pepita Djoffon – apparel
 - Bonaventure Tohon – apparel
 - Jean-Baptiste Hounyovi – apparel
 - Any Pascale – apparel
 - Marcel Houessouvi – apparel
 - GPHAB – apparel
 - La Référence des Costumes Italiens – apparel
 - Lino N'Dasso – apparel
- c. *Home furnishings producers*
- Agnès Hekpazo Creation – home furnishings and apparel
 - Coopérative du Meuble – furniture
 - Trameb-Benin – furniture
- d. *Artists and Art galleries*
- Encadrement Design
 - René Gnahoui – painter

3. Product Survey

- a. The team assessed the marketability of a cross section of craft products during the first workshop "*Defining Quality*". Representative samples were brought and displayed at the workshop site by about 40 crafts producers, at NIEDA request.
- b. Other opportunities for evaluation of handicrafts were offered by:
 - Showroom of the Centre de Promotion de l'Artisanat
 - Crafts vendors
 - Retail outlets.
- c. Mill-made fabrics were evaluated at several retail outlets, including:
 - COTEB
 - Impression d'Afrique
 - BENTEX
 - SO.B.A (Ste. Béninoise d'Ameublement)
 - Dantokpa market

4. Development of handcrafted samples

The team worked with the following craftspeople, artists and manufacturers in the development of products, which combined the inputs of at least two producers.

- Espace Tissage Plus – hand weaving
- René Gnahoui – textile hand painting
- Tossivi – apparel
- Agnès Hekpazo Creation – home furnishings and apparel
- Médard Hantan (CPA) – appliqué items
- Sculpture Beau Bois – wood carvings
- Avadra Gabin – brass items
- Atelum – lamps
- Trameb-Benin – furniture

The Coopérative du Meuble (furniture) declined the offer to make a sample with NIEDA, since the Board President plans to seek funding for expansion before testing the U.S. market.

5. Photos and brochures

The team collected brochures and/or photographed products made by:

- La Finesse – textile hand weaving
- Centre Béninois de Métiers Traditionnels – raffia hand weaving
- Espace Tissage Plus – hand weaving
- Abesil Teinture – batik fabrics
- Atelier de Batik "Saint Esprit" – batik home furnishings
- Floride – batik home furnishings and apparel
- Asiebe – wood carvings
- Jean-Baptiste Hounyovi – apparel
- Any Pascal – apparel

Few indicative photos are included in this report in order to avoid repetitiveness. Such necessary selection should not be construed as an assessment of the capabilities of those producers not represented.

6. Seminars and workshops

The team conducted:

- Seminar I – *Exporting . . . the Building Blocks* (about 80 participants). This seminar was attended by Wassi Mouftaou, President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Benin.
- Workshop I – *Defining Quality* (over 80 participants). This workshop was attended by Noël Dossou-Yovo, Directeur Adjoint de Cabinet, Ministère du Commerce, de l'Artisanat et du Tourisme du Bénin.
- Workshop II – *Beating the Competition* (over 80 participants).
- Seminar II – *Going Upmarket* with presentation of new samples (photos on following page). This seminar was attended by over 90 participants, including Harry Lightfoot, Sr., Mission Director, USAID/Benin, Pascal Zinzindohoue, USAID/Benin, officers from the Ministry of Commerce, Artisanat and Tourism, and officers from the Ministry of Industry, Small and Medium Enterprises. However, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Benin was not represented.

D. FEEDBACK TO PRODUCERS

Four chapters of this report have been bound together as a separate document so that photocopies can be distributed to interested producers. These chapters are:

1. Development of Handcrafted Samples
2. U.S. Market Linkages
3. Market Reaction
4. Trade Potential of Craft-based Goods.

These excerpts are meant to:

- Provide producers with market feed back on samples presented;
- Highlight the need for quality and differentiation;
- Continue the mobilization of SMMEs.



This is the first mini collection of Beninese products geared to an international market. Descriptions of each sample are provided in Chapter II – *Development of Handcrafted Samples*.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF HANDCRAFTED SAMPLES

The team collaborated with craft producers and small-enterprises in the development of samples, indicative of new product directions. The samples are merely an indication of product lines that can be developed, and are to be viewed as beginnings and not points of arrival. We sought new directions to begin the process of product development and diversification, transfer of know-how for quality control, cost-effective production methods, and pricing. (Enterprise profiles – ANNEX I).

These sample products are essentially handcrafted, frequently incorporating indigenous design elements, and there are not similar U.S. products with which they will compete or which they will substantially injure.

These samples — entirely executed by Beninese producers with NIEDA guidance — demonstrate the impact of well-aimed technical assistance, even when limited to few days. They also attest to the level of cooperation of most producers, since sample making entailed deployment of key workers from ongoing production, and often overtime work.

Specifically, these samples were developed to:

- Explore new utilizations of materials and skills;
- Show the quality of craft skills;
- Show the range of Beninese materials;
- Show how cooperation among producers in the handicraft and manufacturing sectors can result in differentiated, better quality products;
- Assess producers' interest in quality upgrade and differentiation;
- Bring Benin to the attention of U.S. market leaders as a potential new source for handcrafted products and materials.

Some producers could not calculate the price of samples, since:

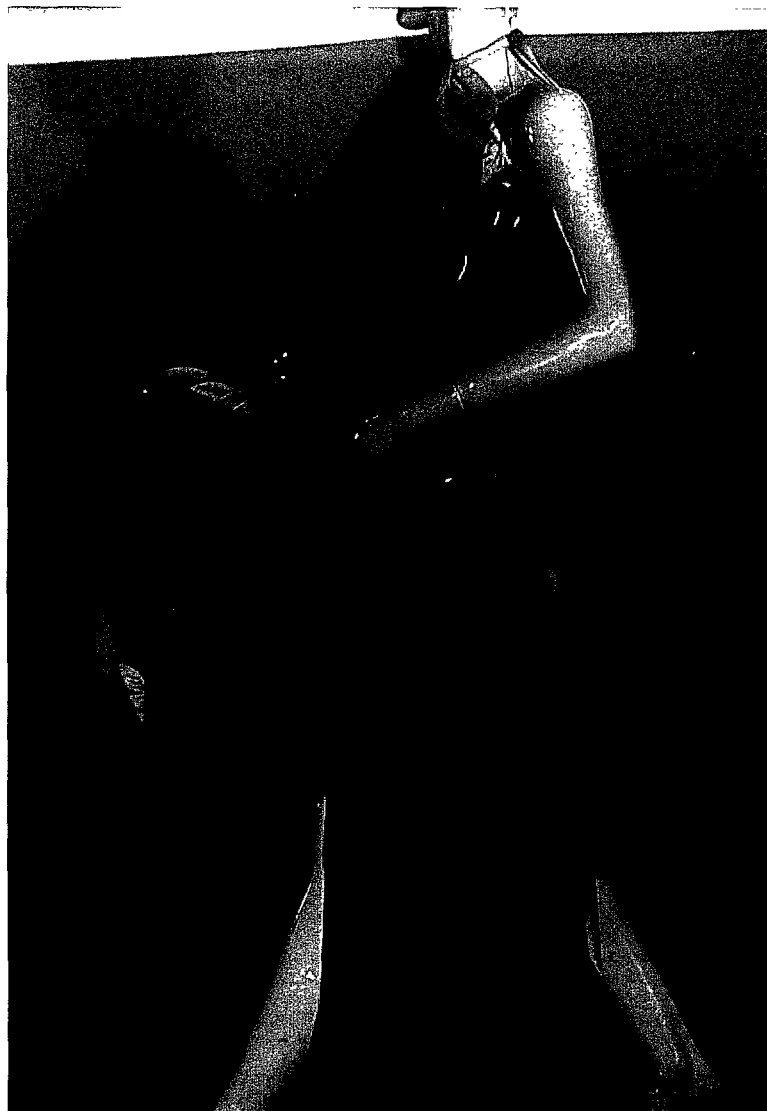
- The time required to make a new sample product far exceeds the time required after the production chain has been set up;
- In some instances, unfamiliar materials and techniques were used;
- At times, materials were bought at retail.

With a workshop on pricing, NIEDA tried to illustrate some basic principles by costing representative samples using a form *Cost-plus Pricing Method* as guideline (ANNEX II). However, most producers were not capable or willing to use the form. Consequently, in several instances, prices are based on what the market – or NIEDA – would bear.

Most prices are FOB Cotonou and have been converted to USD (\$1 = FCFA 750).

A. APPAREL WITH HANDCRAFTED INPUTS

Sample⁵ #1



Hand finished gown and scarf made by *Tossivi*
 Fabric hand painted by *René Gnahoui*
 Imported crepe fabric in synthetic fiber

Price not calculated
 Hand painting price: \$5.34/meter
 Price: \$4.70/meter

René Gnahoui is an artist whose paintings and cloth pieces have been exhibited in Mali, and Burkina Faso. His works are also exhibited at the boutiques *Artisans du Soleil* in Cotonou, Paris and Angers (France). These showroom/retail outlets have been established by the *Echange pour l'Organisation et la Promotion des Petits Entrepreneurs (Echoppe)*, a not-for-profit organization also active in Togo.

⁵ In this chapter, the word *Sample* indicates a product taken to the U.S.A. for evaluation, and the word *Photo* indicates a product whose photo alone was shown.

Sample #2

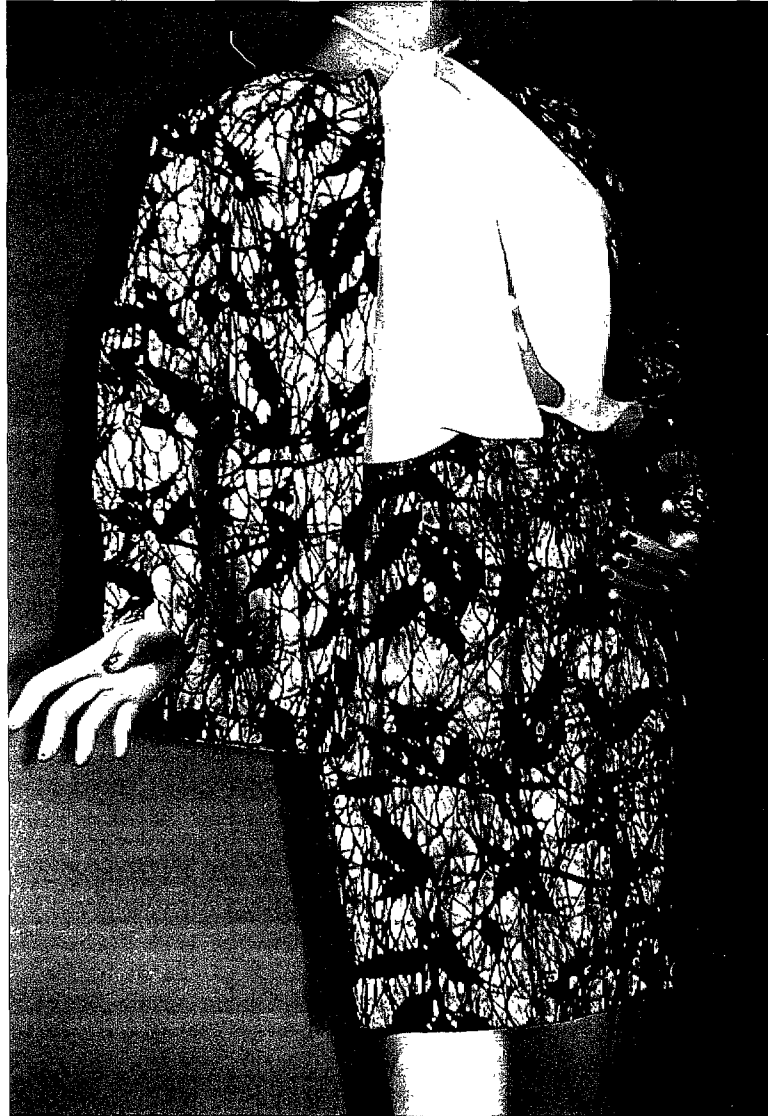


Hand finished three-piece outfit made by *Tossivi*
Fabric hand painted by *René Gnahoui*
Imported unbleached cotton fabric

Price not calculated
Hand painting price: \$3.34/meter
Price: \$4.00/meter

René Gnahoui has studied Mali's bogolan (mud-cloth) and its symbolic significance for ten years. Now, in addition to his output as painter, he decorates unbleached cotton cloth with natural dyes (vegetable and mineral) for both background and stenciled designs, often inspired by traditional themes.

Photo #3



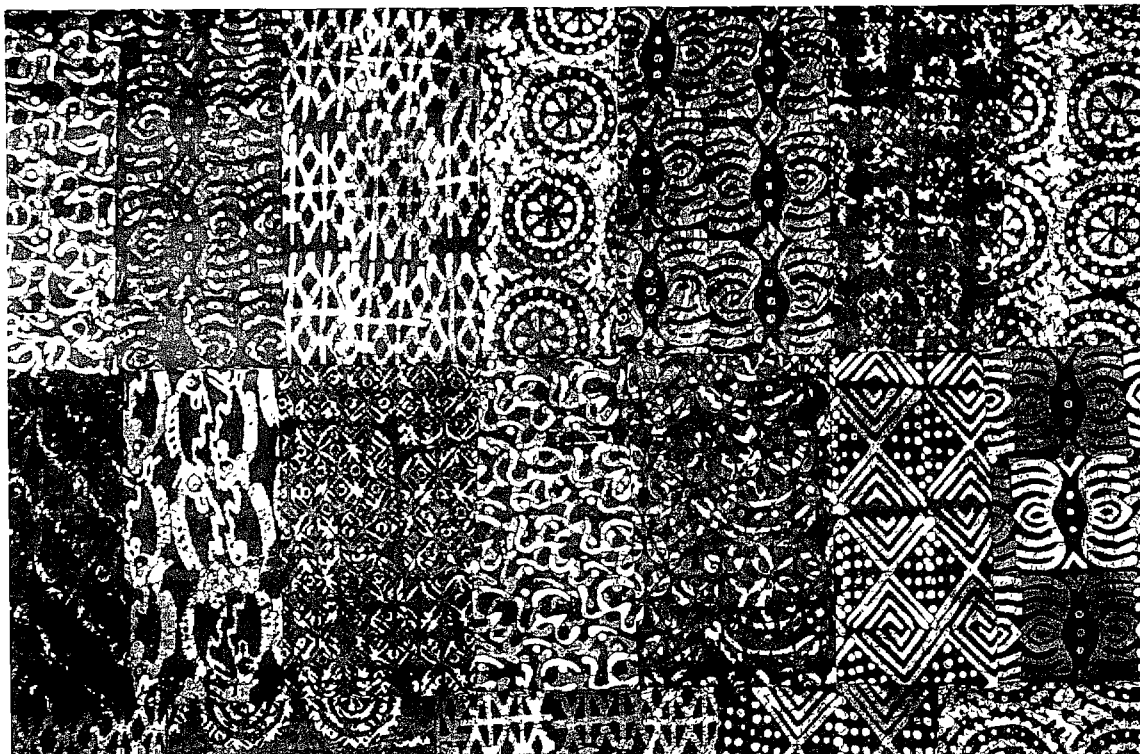
Hand finished three-piece outfit made by *Tossivi*
Beninese print cotton fabric

Price not calculated
Price: \$3.50/meter

Tossivi complemented this outfit with a vest in the same print cotton fabric and a pair of black trousers, since NIEDA wanted to illustrate the advantage of coordinates as a way of widening the product mix and increasing sales (see photos on page 6).

Tossivi is a small family enterprise making made-to-order apparel for private clients. Mrs. Raymonde d'Almeida, its owner and director, also teaches apparel making at the Lycée Technique of Cotonou, and has written a manual on the subject. Such training activity will extend the benefit of NIEDA technical assistance beyond this individual enterprise.

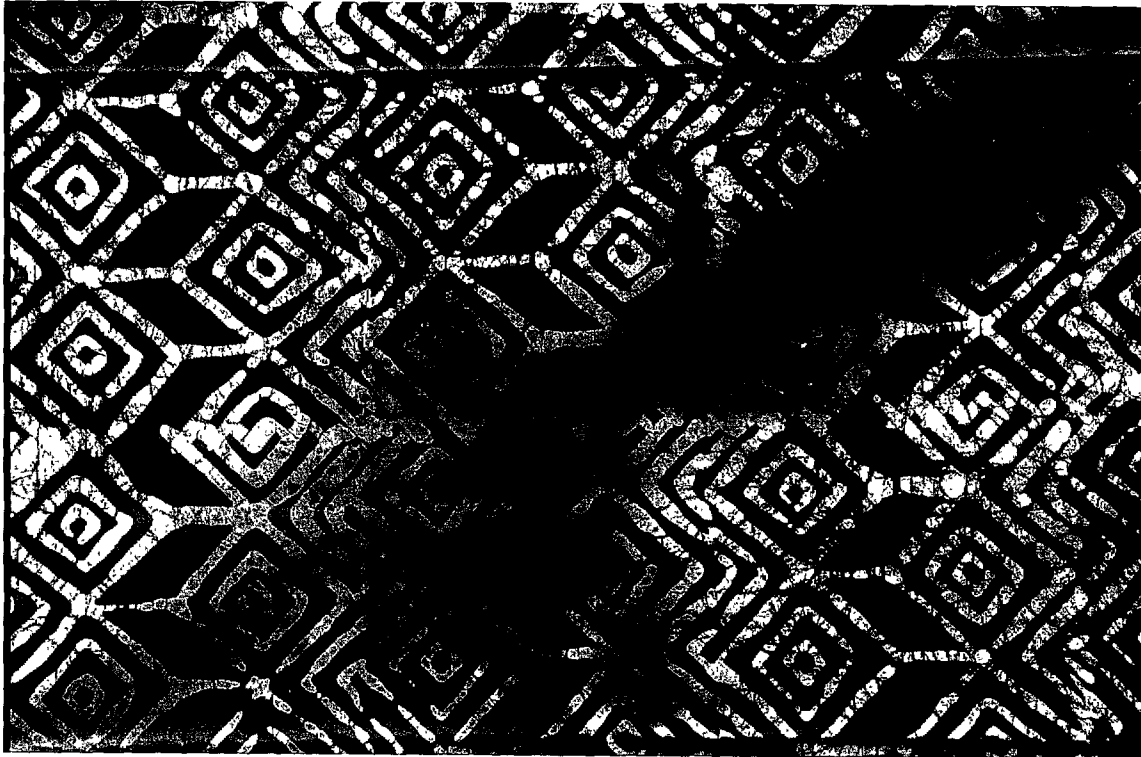
Photo #4



Batik cotton fabrics hand dyed by *Abesyl Teinture* Price: from \$3.30 to 4.00/per 4-meter cut

This dying technique is practiced in some form throughout Southeast Asia – mostly in Indonesia and Malaysia – and in several African nations. In the Malaysian language, batik refers to a fabric dying method that uses wax to create patterns, method known as *resist process*. Liquid wax is applied to unbleached cloth, and when the cloth is dyed, the wax in the fabric resists coloring. The wax is subsequently melted away, and the unbleached cloth remains as a pattern. Indonesia and Malaysia are the major exporters of batik articles, from clothing and home furnishings to wall hangings.

Photo #5



Batik cotton fabric by *Atelier de Batik "Saint Esprit"*

Price: \$4/per 4-meter cut

The bold designs and colors of most batik fabrics made in Benin – however attractive – limit their acceptance by the average American and European consumer, especially in regions with cold climates. Even in Malaysia, there is a concerted effort to revive batik though the introduction of original designs in subdued colors for its utilization in modern apparel. The government itself encourages citizens to wear batik apparel at least once a week, as Western clothing becomes increasingly popular. However, batik continues to appeal to those consumers who value uniqueness, since all work is done by hand and each piece is an original with no other being exactly the same.

On following pages 13 and 14, see indicative samples of Indonesian batik fabrics marketed via the Internet by the *Craft Connection*.

Gift Connection

[home](#)

[index](#)

[free](#)

[feedback](#)

[e-mail](#)

Home
Up

Hoffman Batik Fabrics

Here are the wonderful Hoffman Bali batiks. All are 100 percent cotton, hand-dyed in Indonesia. Fabrics are very high quality, with a nice hand, but they do have wrinkles as a result of the hand-dyeing process.

***We have too many batiks for one page. So check out our gorgeous Hoffman watercolor batiks at Hoffman watercolors, and all our other batiks on our main Batiks page.



indigo
945 \$7.64



moss
945 \$7.64



burgundy
945 \$8.10



945batik
jewel \$7.65



945batik
rose \$7.65



natural
945 \$8.10



947batik
sage \$8.10



947batik
butter \$7.64



947batik
seafm \$8.10



947batik
mango \$7.64



x Hoffman
947 batik
mango
fabric



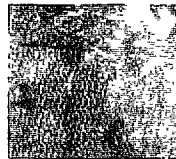
948batik
indigo \$8.10



hyacinth
948 \$7.64



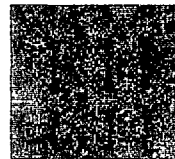
butter
948 \$8.10



949 mango
batik \$8.10



950batik
frblue \$7.64



950batik
jewel \$7.64



951batik
sky \$7.64



frenchblue
951 \$7.64



951batik
sage \$7.64



952batik
pastel \$7.68



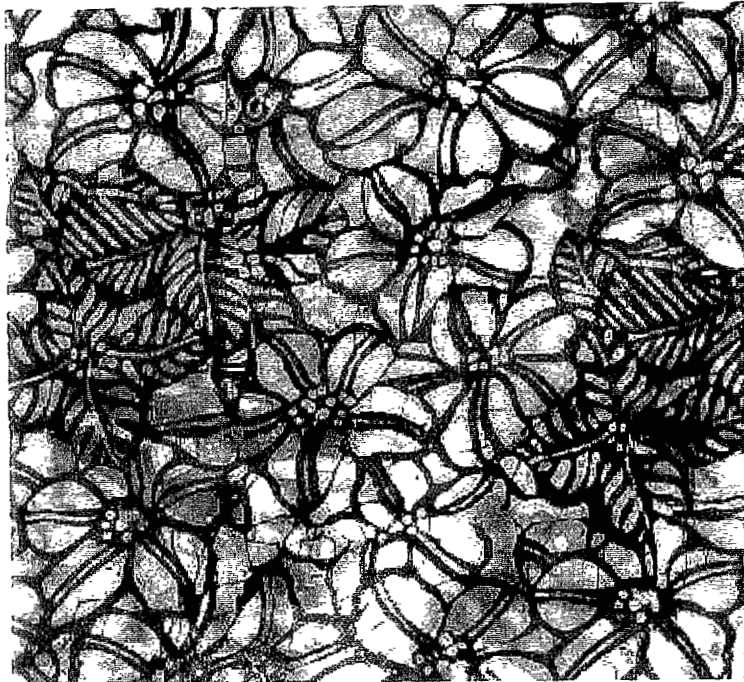
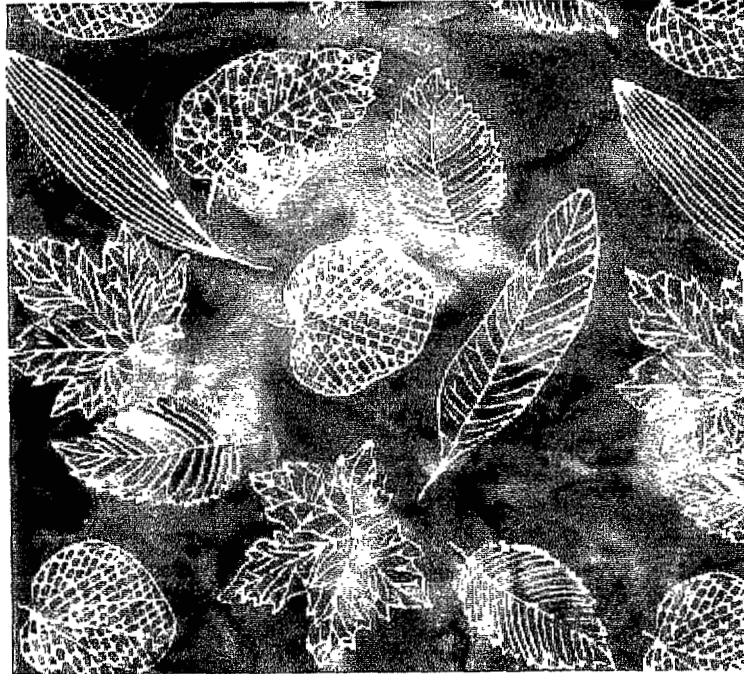
952 rainbow
batik \$7.68

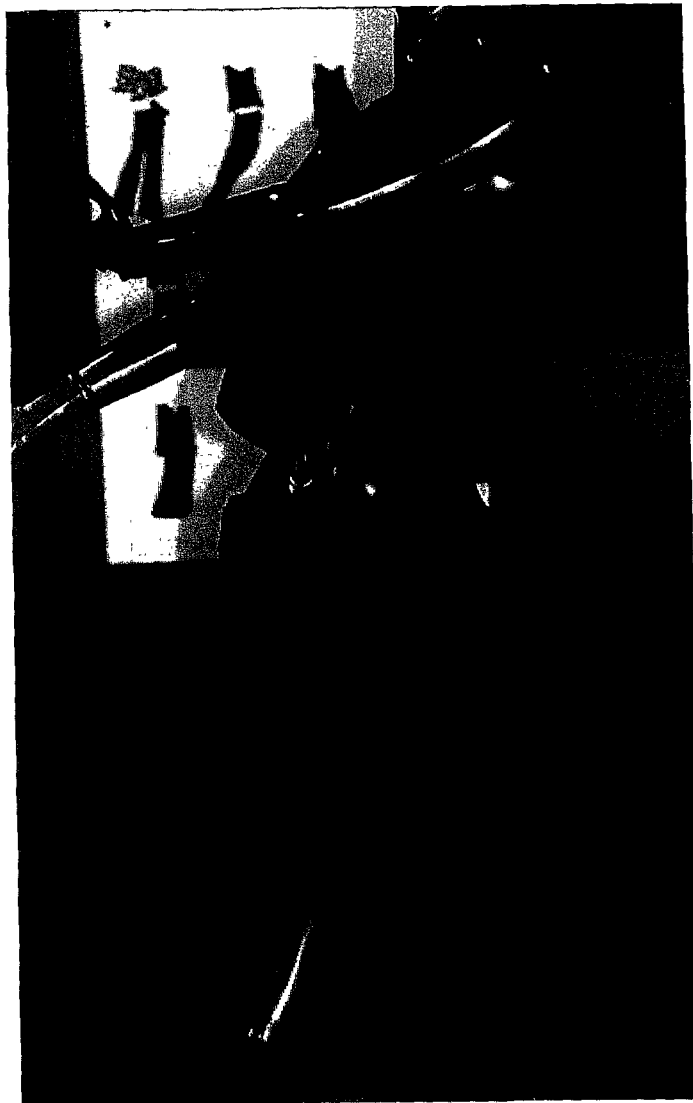


hyacinth
952 \$7.64



954batik
sunset \$7.65



Sample #6

Two-piece coordinate by *Agnès Hekpazo Creation*

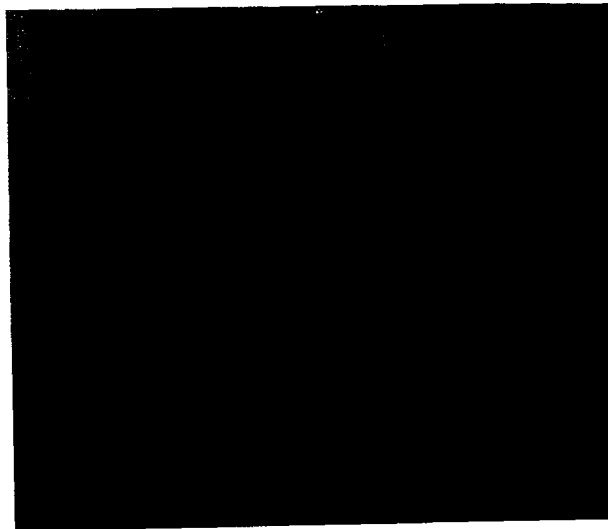
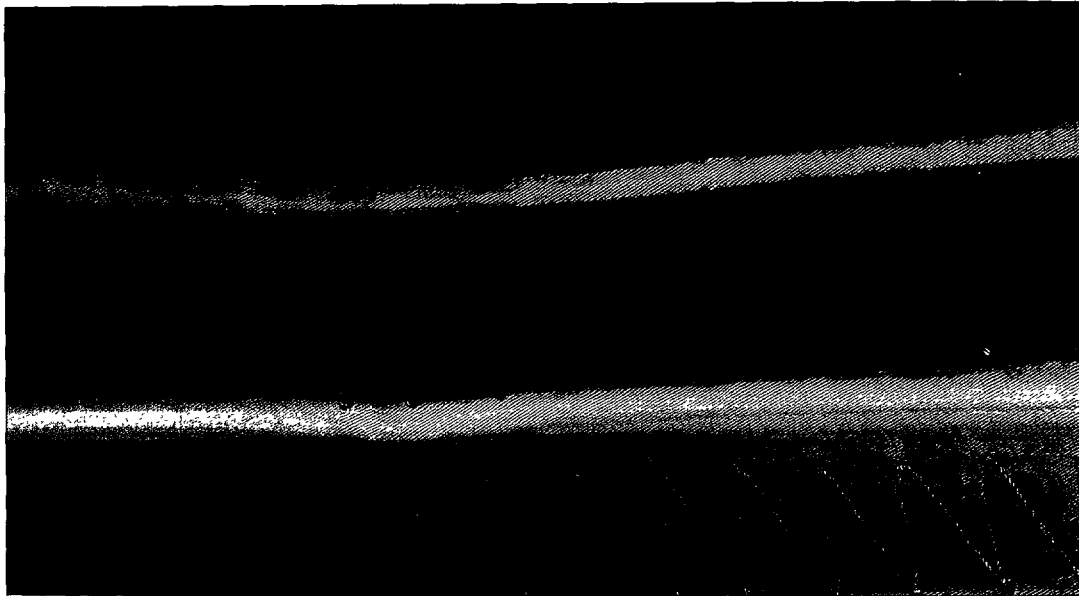
Prices not calculated

The top is made in cotton fabric imported from the Ivory Coast, hand dyed (chemical dye) and hand decorated with cord by *Agnès Hekpazo Creation* (see detail on following page).

The skirt is made in cotton fabric imported from the Ivory Coast, hand dyed (chemical dye) and hand crimped by *Agnès Hekpazo Creation* (see detail on following page).

Wooden button hand made by *Agnès Hekpazo Creation*.

Sample #7

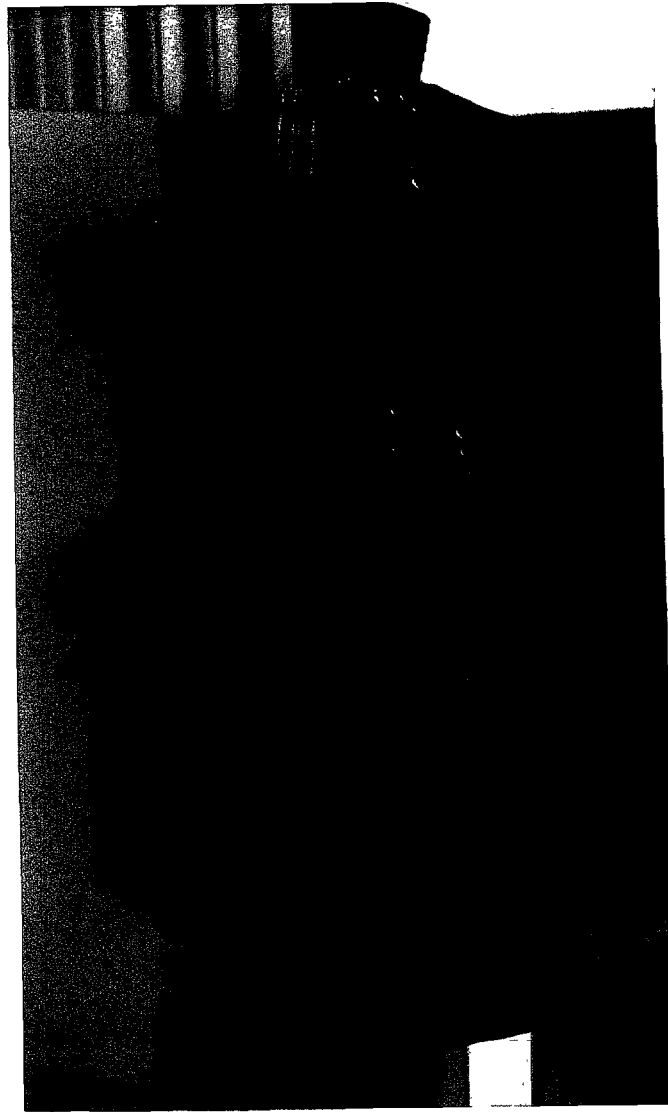


Cotton fabric used for top
Cotton fabric used for skirt

Price: \$33/meter CIF New York
Price: \$25/meter CIF New York

Agnès Hekpazo Creation is exporting tie-dye home furnishings (pillows and drapes) to the French mass-market chain La Redoute, which also carried women's casual apparel in fabrics handcrafted by Agnès Hekpazo Creation – garments that were manufactured in France. Now Ms. Hekpazo is looking for a contractor in Africa until this enterprise's garment manufacturing capabilities are upgraded.

Sample #8



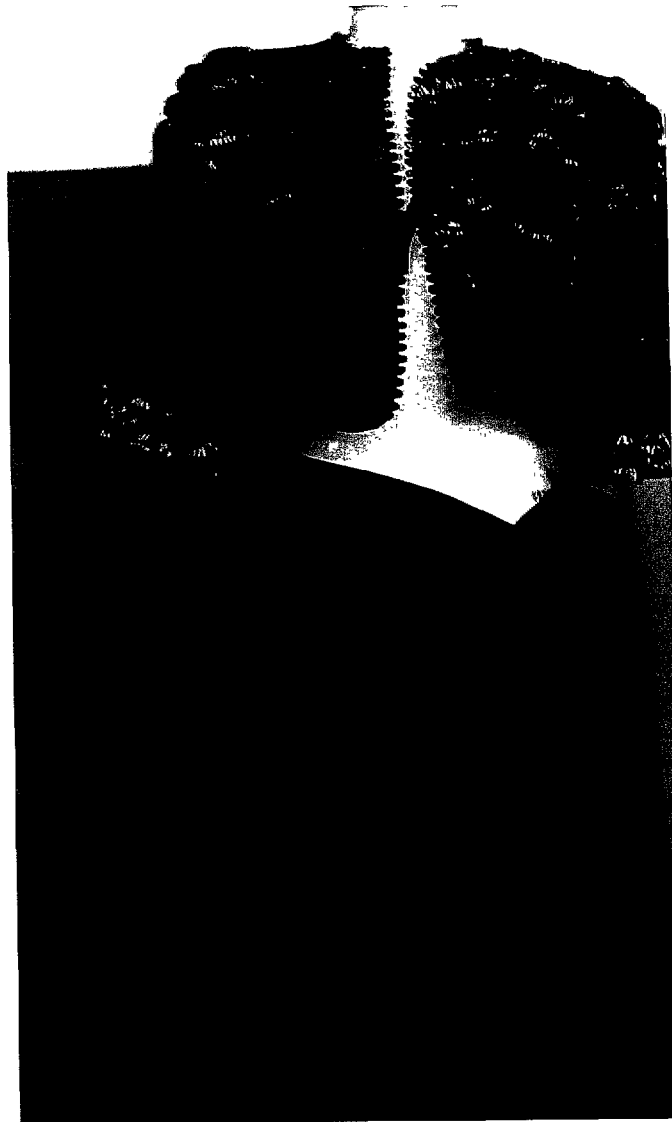
Three-piece outfit made by *Agnès Hekpazo Creation*

Prices not calculated

The brick-colored jacket and skirt are made in Beninese cotton fabric hand dyed (natural dye) by *Agnès Hekpazo Creation*. Fabric price: \$12/meter CIF New York

The gathered chocolate-colored top is made in Beninese cotton fabric hand dyed (chemical dye), and decorated with tie-dye designs by *Agnès Hekpazo Creation*. Fabric price: \$86/meter CIF New York

The natural dyes used are mineral and vegetable, including indigo.

Sample #9

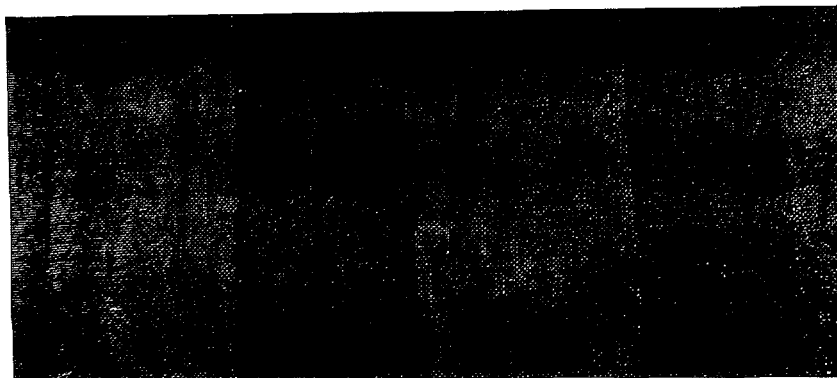
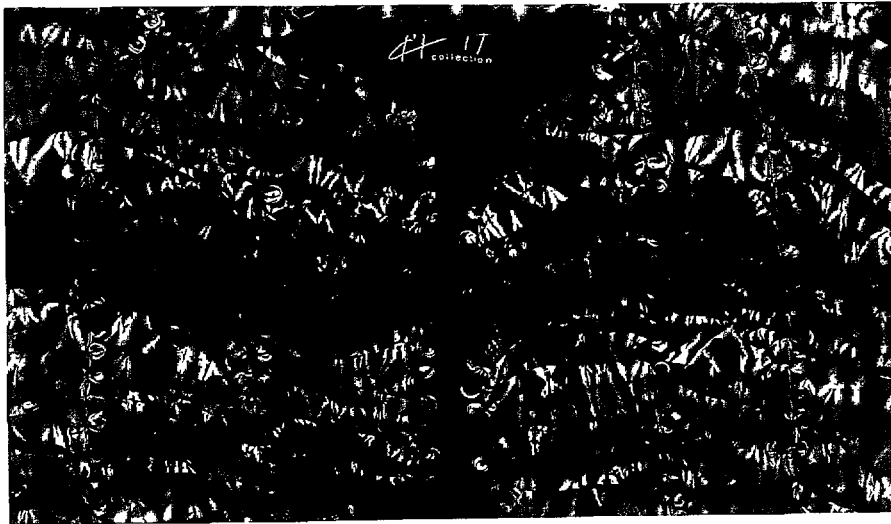
Two-piece outfit by *Agnès Hekpazo Creation*

Prices not calculated

The gathered top is made in Beninese cotton fabric using the tie-dye technique (chemical dye) and decorated with hand knotted vertical motifs by *Agnès Hekpazo Creation* (see detail on following page).

The trousers and belt are made in hand crimped and hand dyed cotton fabric (chemical dye) by *Agnès Hekpazo Creation* (see detail on following page).

Hand made wooden buttons by *Agnès Hekpazo Creation*.

Sample #10

Cotton fabric used for top
Cotton fabric used for trousers

Fabric price: \$86/meter CIF New York
Fabric price: \$25/meter CIF New York

The tie-dye technique consists of tying small dots of cloth with thread to create designs and motifs on fabrics. The tying of dots is repeated as many times as dictated by the complexity of the final design. After tying, the fabric is dyed. The ties are then removed, revealing fabric with designs and texture created by the ties, since the formerly tied areas not only "resist" dyeing, but also take on a relief-like quality.

Tie-dye is an ancient skill that reached its height in 13th to 16th century Japan, where one of the most valued status symbols was a tie-dyed silk kimono. In the United States in the 1960's, there was a resurgence of tie-dye as the younger generation used it as a symbol of individuality, peace, and love. In Africa, this labor-intensive craft is practiced in many countries, including Nigeria, Cameroon, Congo, Sudan, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya.

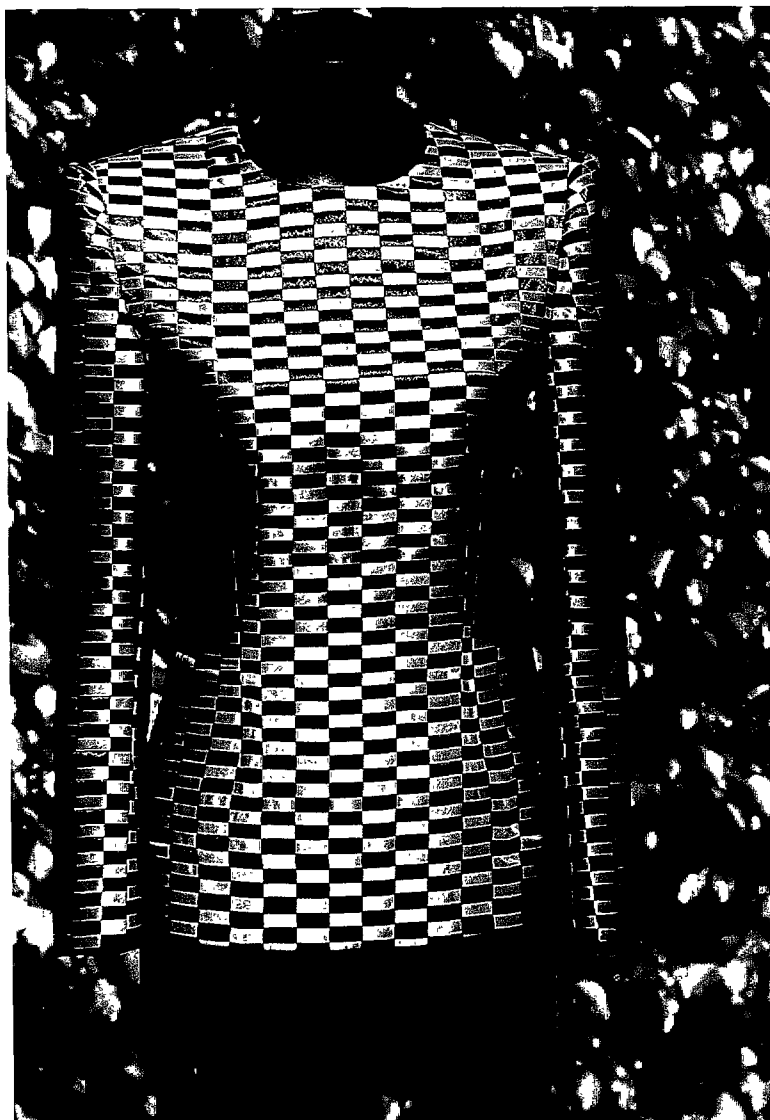
Sketch #11



Sketches by *Pietro Bianco*, which illustrate the possible combinations of items made by Agnès Hekpazo Creation.

Especially in the United States, there is an increasing preference for coordinates, reflecting a trend toward casual clothing even in the workplace. As a result, retailers are widening their assortment of coordinates, since they allow the average person to be properly dressed with a smaller wardrobe of items that can be easily mixed and matched.

Photo #12



Tailored jacket in woven-ribbon fabric by *J.B. Hounyovi*

Price: \$179 each/per dozen

NIEDA could not develop a new product sample with Mr. Hounyovi, since this fashion designer was involved with the setting up of his new boutique in Cotonou. However, NIEDA selected this jacket – indicative of Jean-Baptiste Hounyovi’s product line – for an evaluation of pricing, styling, and marketability. For several years, Mr. Hounyovi has been teaching apparel making to Beninese and other West African students.

B. HANDCRAFTED ACCESSORIES**Photo #13**

Shoes and handbag made in hand woven raffia by *Benin Center of Traditional Works*

Price not available

In view of its good quality, NIEDA requested swatches of the hand woven raffia to show U.S product designers who could have placed sample orders according to their designs and color combinations. This small training/production group would have benefited from such link in economic and creative terms. However, NIEDA never received the swatches selected, possibly due to the advice of their local sales representative, who would have been bypassed by such direct link with the export market.

C. TEXTILE HOME FURNISHINGS WITH HANDCRAFTED INPUTS**Sample #14**

Pillows stitched by *Tossivi*
Appliqué components hand crafted by *Médard Hantan*

Price not calculated
Price: \$8 each

In addition to home furnishings, Mr. Hantan could handcraft apparel components for assembly by garment manufacturers as well as appliqué work by the meter for interior designers.

Photo #15



This wall hanging, hand crafted by *Médard Hantan*, indicates the type of decorative items and home furnishings made by this small family enterprise. The pattern used to represent the giraffe is the same as the overall design for the sample pillows.

These appliqué wall hangings, depicting animals or hunting scenes, are today's adaptations of traditional banners depicting historical events and kings of the Kingdom of Dahomey, when craftspeople were the Kingdom's historians.

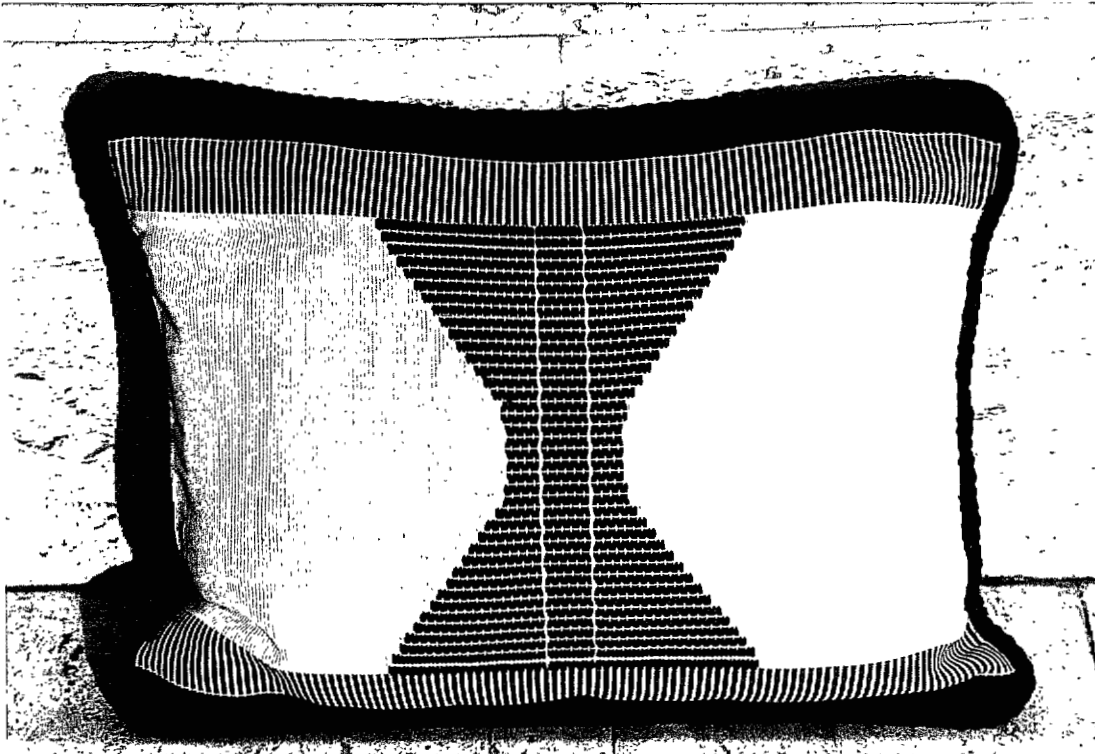
On following page, see *Pottery Barn* advertisements indicative of appliqué products marketed in the United States.

Top: quilt with hand appliqué, embroidery, and other handiwork

Bottom: organdy curtain with leaf appliqué



Sample #16



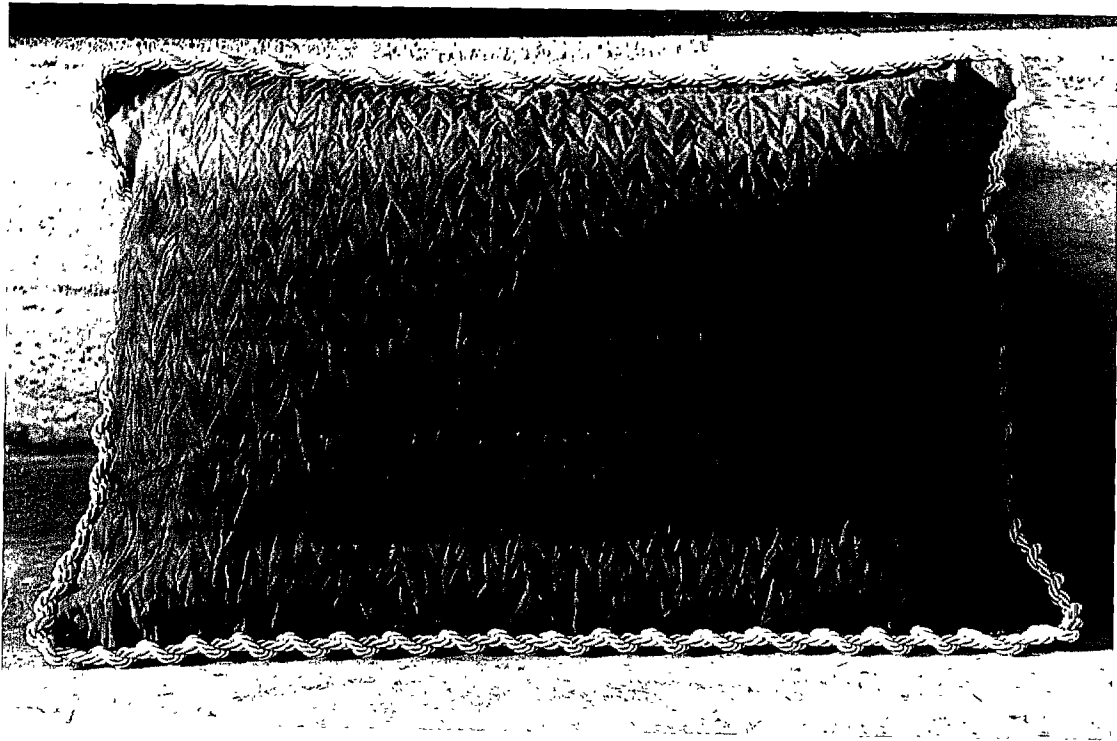
Pillow in hand woven cotton by *Espace Tissage Plus*
Braid trim applied by *Tossivi*

Price: \$8.70
Price not calculated

Espace Tissage Plus is a not-for-profit organization whose mandate is to upgrade and promote traditional hand weaving of cotton and raffia. This organization also researches natural dyes as element of differentiation of their hand woven articles.

Until recently, only a limited number of textile craftspeople had the technical skill of vegetable dyeing in Benin. In industrialized countries, however, there is an increasing interest in products colored with natural dyes. European and American consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the ecological and environmental problems related to the use of synthetic dyes.

Sample #17



Pillow stitched by *Agnès Hekpazo Creation*
Braid trim applied by *Tossivi*

Price: \$25 CIF New York
Price not calculated

The cotton fabric, imported from the Ivory Coast, is hand dyed (chemical dye) and hand crimped by *Agnès Hekpazo Creation*.

In all likelihood, the chemical dye used for this fabric was an “organic dye”, since industrial dye manufacturers have responded to the public’s environmental concerns by developing this new organic dyes, which preserve the same color quality of the metal-based inorganic synthetics but leave minimal toxic residue.

Sample #18



Pillow stitched by *Tossivi*
 Fabric hand painted by *René Gnahoui*
 Imported unbleached cotton fabric

Price not calculated
 Hand painting price: \$3.34/meter
 Price: \$4.00/meter

Natural-dyed products represent a good opportunity for value-added exports, given their ecological benefit and their soft hues. However, the wash and light fastness of natural dyes is not comparable to industrially manufactured pigments, nor are their brilliant colors. These characteristics require greater consumer education to widen their acceptance – e.g. product information on product hangtags.

As indication of the growing interest in natural-dyed products, U.S. imports of natural dyes reached \$41 million in 1998 with a 70 percent increase from 1994 and an increase of 22 percent from 1997. The EU import market for natural dyes reached approximately \$70 million in 1998, which was an increase of 46 percent from 1994 and 10 percent from 1997. The primary importers in Europe for natural dyes and colorants are Germany (32 percent), France (17 percent), Italy (14 percent) and the UK (10 percent)⁶.

⁶ Sources: USA Trade and EUROSTAT

Sample #19



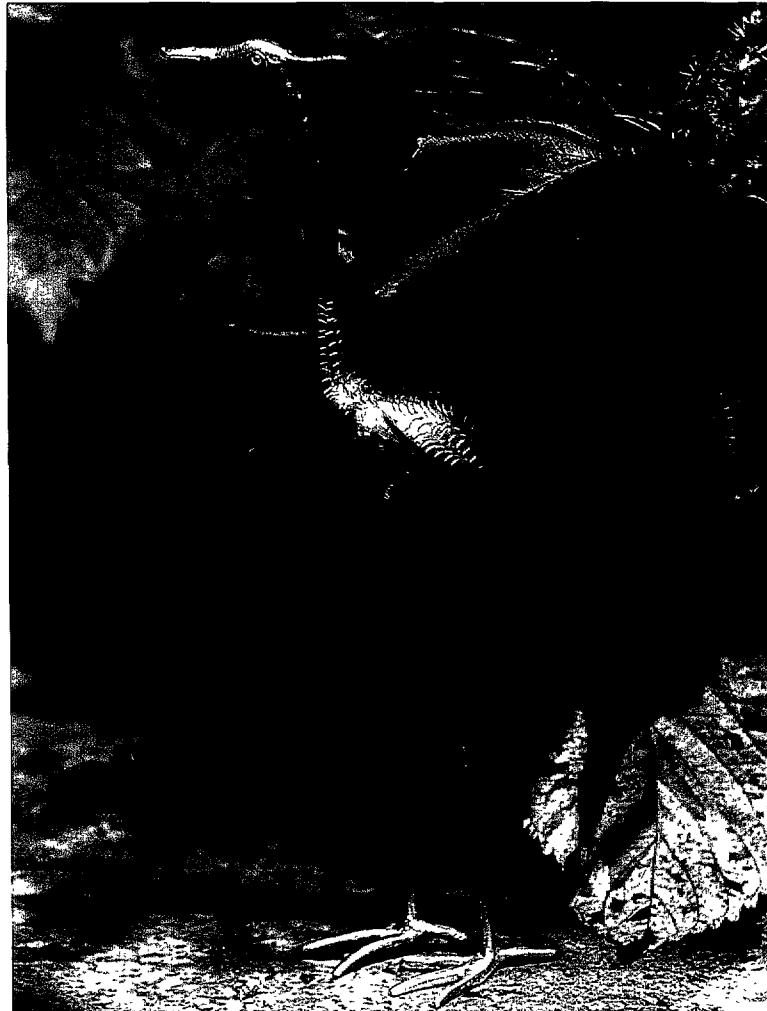
Mahogany lamp base machine made and hand finished by *Trameb-Benin* Price: \$13.40
 Hand made lamp shade⁷ by *Atelum* Price: \$5.40
 Fabric hand painted by *René Gnahoui* Hand painting price: \$3.34/meter
 Imported unbleached cotton fabric Price: \$4.00/meter

Mr. Gnahoui could explore new forms of artistic expression by decorating, signing, and numbering ceramic lamp bases or other decorative items made in limited editions. Such input would confer an identity to products by capturing those cultural characteristics unique to Benin.

⁷ The lamp shade was shown as a photo.

D. HANDCRAFTED DECORATIVE ITEMS

Sample #20



Brass heron hand crafted by *Avadra Gabin*

Price: \$8

According to this young artisan, this heron is a replica of a museum piece from Benin heritage. In Benin, the museum pieces more frequently reproduced are bronze equilibrists and erotic miniatures. However, they are aimed at the tourist trade and their quality is rather poor. Such items do not compare favorably with other West African bronze items – often made in Nigeria – which are sold in some Beninese crafts shops. However, there exists a lucrative export market for quality replicas or adaptations of museum pieces that are successfully marketed through museums shops and catalogs, and by Internet companies.

On following page, see indicative samples of contemporary sculptures marketed via the Internet by the *MuseumCompany.com*.

MUSEUM

COLLECTORS.COM

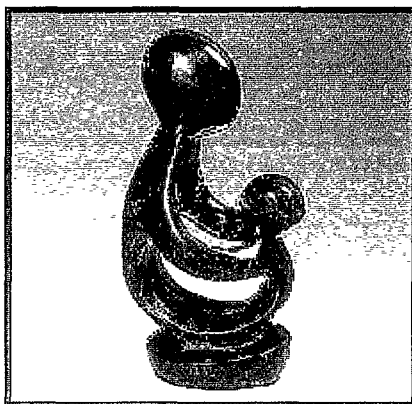
HOME • MY ACCOUNT • ABOUT US • AFFILIATES • STORE LOCATIONS • CUSTOMER CARE

- Museums
- Artists
- Gifts
- Giftware
- Jewelry
- Home Decor
- Tableware
- Books
- Books, CDs, Videos
- Toys for All Ages
- Collectibles
- Clothing & Accessories
- Sculpture

Contemporary COLLECTION

Home : Sculpture :

<< PREV 23 ITEMS PAGE 1 OF 3 NEXT >>



© 2008 Museum Collectors.com

Shona Mother and Child Spirit Figures

Handcarved from a single piece of serpentine, each sculpture is a unique work of art. The freestanding piece was carved by an artist of the Shona peoples from Zimbabwe and may vary in color from dark green to light orange-brown. The sleek, abstract beauty is a contemporary expression of a living ancient culture. The Mother and Child Spirit Figure seen here depicts a mother's love for her young child, with a tender embrace.

SIZE: 6"H
PRICE: \$49.00

SIZE: 11"H
PRICE: \$139.00 **Out of Stock**



Lipman-Wulf's Wedding Rings
\$89.00



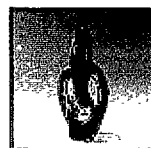
Shona Loving / Dancing Family
\$85.00



Shona Mother and Child Spirit Figures
\$49.00



Shona Loving Couple Sculpture
\$139.00



Shona Endless Double Happiness Loop
\$59.00



Shona Eternity Dancing Couple
\$89.00

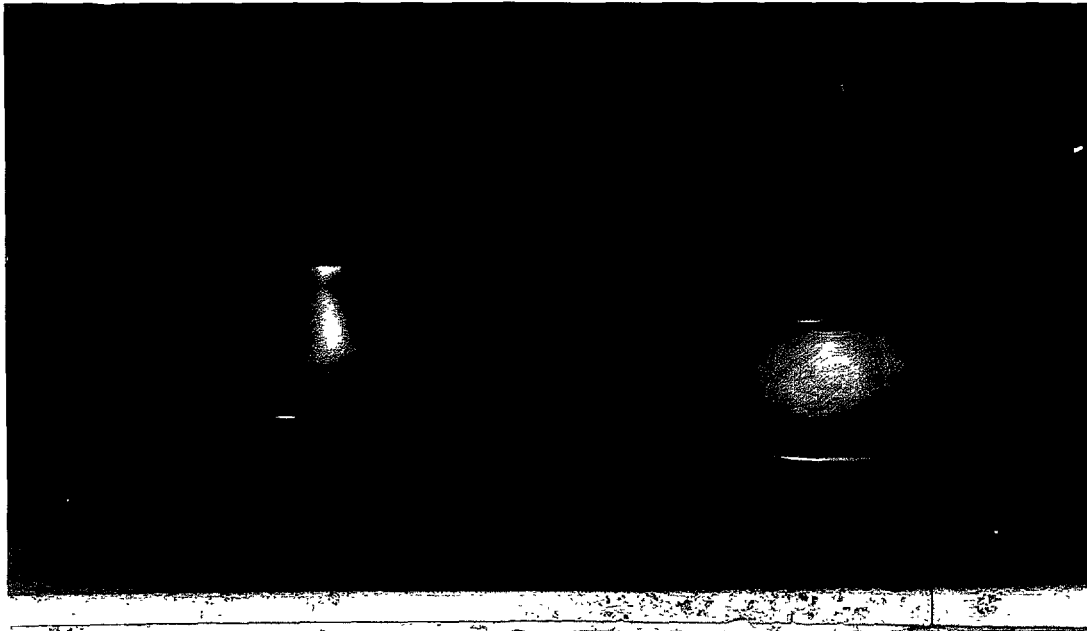


The Muse
\$159.00



Brancusi's Kiss
\$65.00

<< PREV 23 ITEMS PAGE 1 OF 3 NEXT >>

Sample #21

Set of salad bowls handcrafted in iroko wood by *Sculpture Beau Bois* Price: \$45
The iroko wood, also known as African or Nigerian teak, is a dense and durable wood often used for furniture making and paneling as a substitute for teak. Regrettably, the largest bowl cracked after two weeks in New York, since the wood was not sufficiently seasoned.

The entrepreneurial owner of this craft enterprise has a showroom/workshop in the center of Cotonou, maintains a showcase with an English-speaking sales attendant at the Benin Sheraton Hotel, and makes periodic sales trips to Chicago. However, his lack of an e-mail address is a serious drawback, since communication has to take place via fax. Most U.S. companies consider the Internet an indispensable trade tool, especially when producers need instructions for the development of new samples.

On following page, see a *Scully & Scully* advertisement of a mahogany and silver plate salad bowl, which exemplifies how product lines can be broadened by the collaboration of artisans of different skills.

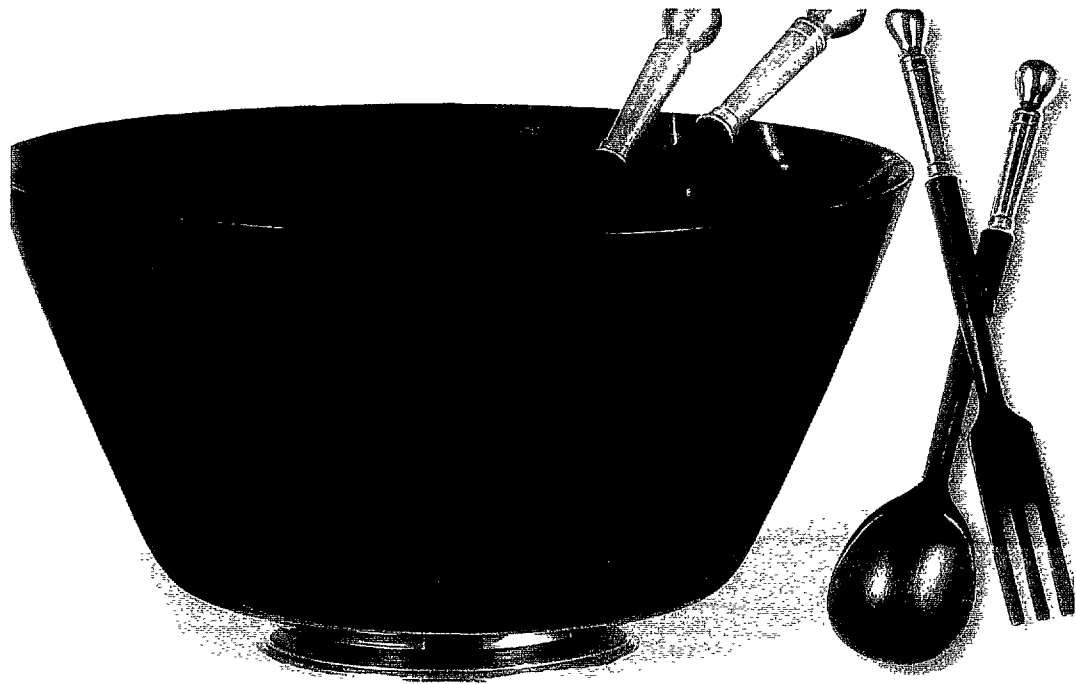


Photo #22

Hand carved stool by *Sculpture Beau Bois*

Price not available

There is a market niche for accent pieces due to their decorative value and small size, which is now an important consideration. In industrialized countries, builders are constructing smaller size homes and apartments in order to provide affordable housing. Large furniture pieces, often manufactured in Benin, would not fit into an average sized room, and their volume would make shipment particularly expensive.

Photo #23

Hand carved "kings' totem" retailed by *Elegance Art Sarl*

Price: \$173

This totem is an adaptation of sculptures created for the kings of Dahomey. Totems with different ornamentations were made for the voodoo cult, and placed at the entrance of the village to ward off evil spirits. Such artifacts are a most effective vehicle for projecting an image of Benin, its culture, and its skills.

Photo #24



Hand carved panels decorating the lobby of the Benin Sheraton Hotel Price not available

These items are but an indication of the skill of woodcarvers, who can make quality products capable of generating a demand in the international market, if marketed effectively.

When hand carved details are incorporated in machine made furniture, such products would have a competitive advantage, given the number of skilled woodcarvers and furniture makers in Benin.

III. U.S. MARKET LINKAGES

A. FIRMS

NIEDA presented the samples in New York to top product experts and decision makers of firms involved in the design, production and marketing of home furnishings, apparel and accessories. They were selected for their wide influence, since they are among the rather small group of companies – in Paris, Milan, London, and New York – that start basic trends in these industries. Consumers and manufacturers accept their authority, and follow the directions they set, with regard to materials, designs, and colors.

These product experts and decision makers, recognized as leaders in their fields, were:

- **Takashimaya New York, Inc.**
- **Saks Fifth Avenue**
- **Neiman Marcus**
- **Angela Cummings Fine Jewelry, Inc.**
- **The MuseumCompany.com**
- **Chado**
- **Kim Seybert**
- **Kim Unger New York**
- **Donghia Furniture/Textiles**

What follows is some basic information about these firms.

1. **Takashimaya New York, Inc.**

Takashimaya Kabushiki-Gaisha is the premier department store company in Japan, and is listed as a top 500 global firm. The company was founded in Kyoto in 1831, and today has department stores in Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Rakusai, Sakai, Wakayama, and several other Japanese cities, as well as branches overseas in such cities as New York, Paris, London, Milan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. The company has \$10 billion annual revenues, and 17,000 employees.

2. **Saks Fifth Avenue**

Saks Incorporated currently operates over 350 stores in 40 states under the names of Saks Fifth Avenue (61 stores), Proffitt's, McRae's, Younkers, Parisian, Herberger's, Carson Pirie Scott, Bergner's, Boston Store, and Off 5th.

The company also operates a direct response business, Saks Direct, which includes the Folio and Bullock & Jones catalogs. For the last twelve months, total company sales were \$6.4 billion, of which the Saks Fifth Avenue stores accounted for 40%.

3. Neiman Marcus

The Neiman Marcus Group operates 31 Neiman Marcus stores in 20 states and the District of Columbia, as well as two Bergdorf Goodman in New York City, and about 10 clearance centers. Its direct-marketing business, NM Direct, distributes catalogs. Neiman Marcus also owns stakes in firms that make cosmetics and handbags. Their stores offer high fashion, high-quality women's and men's apparel, accessories, and home decor. In 1999, the group revenue was \$2.5 billion.

4. Angela Cummings Fine Jewelry, Inc.

Angela Cummings, Elsa Perreti and Paloma Picasso are some of the highly individual artists who have created innovative designs for Tiffany, the world-renowned American jeweler. Ms. Cummings left Tiffany's to start her own business, Angela Cummings Fine Jewelry Inc. Now the jewelry departments of Bergdorf Goodman and Takashimaya, among other retailers, boast the nature-inspired jewels of Angela Cummings. In 1984, the designer won the first annual Awards of Excellence, which was established to recognize women's achievements in the jewelry industry.

5. The MuseumCompany.com

This complete Internet store is the sister company of the successful The Museum Company, the world's largest retailer of museum-related merchandise. They share the same mission of offering high-quality reproductions, adaptations, and interpretations from the world's finest museum collections. Since 1989, The Museum Company has worked with such museums as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Fine Arts of Boston, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London to bring authorized, museum-related items for exclusive sale. The Museum Company has over 90 retail stores in the United States, Canada, and Israel, with over 40 million customers annually.

6. Chado

A New York-based designer who shows his collection during the fashion presentations *Sixth on Seventh* in New York.

7. Kim Seybert

An established New York-based company whose founder, Ms. Seybert, travels the world working with artisans specialized in traditional skills such as embroidery, hand painting, and hand beading. Her collections of table wear, decorative home accessories, and fashion items are sold in all Neiman Marcus stores and all Saks Fifth Avenue stores, among others.

8. Kay Unger New York

Fashion designer known for her signature innovative prints and hand beading.

9. Donghia

Donghia Furniture/Textiles Ltd., founded in 1968, is a global business with showrooms and distributors in over 30 countries, including South Africa. For years, hotels around the world, including the Four Seasons in New York, have been inspired by the Donghia look – high-end furniture, fabric, lighting, and wall covering that are based on the highest quality craftsmanship and materials, clean lines and comfort.

B. WHY THESE FIRMS**1. RETAILERS**

When retailers with a trendy or glamorous image carry a firm's apparel and home furnishings, the benefits to the producer are significant, especially if the store's name enjoys international recognition for quality and style.

a. Department stores

Department stores remain the primary distribution channel for many apparel companies, since consumers tend to shop there for differentiated merchandise. Department stores have expanded their selection of women's apparel, accessories, cosmetics and fragrances, which typically generate higher margins, and are more in keeping with the upscale image most stores are trying to project. Department stores are also leaders in home textile fashions, since consumers buy the more fashionable items there – e.g., embroidered towels and table linens.

b. Specialty stores

Specialty stores specialize in a specific type of merchandise such as women's clothing, men's clothing, children's clothing, bed and bath products. Compared to department stores, they carry a deeper assortment of distinctive, quality merchandise – targeted to fashion-conscious consumers – at prices that range from moderate to high. Specialty stores are successfully competing with department stores, since they provide consumers with a huge selection of products, allowing a customer to purchase many items in a single visit.

c. Private labels

Many retailing chains create and market their own apparel and home product lines to take customers away from designer labels. Private labels have become a dominant and highly lucrative segment of the retailing industry, since they offer consumers quality at a good price, while retailers benefit from higher markups. Store brands have gross margins ranging from 30 percent to 100 percent higher than national brands. Many consumers also believe that national brands are overpriced merely to support advertising and promotional budgets. For their private labels, stores source merchandise directly from overseas suppliers, and set price range, delivery dates, product specifications, packaging and transportation methods. In addition, private labels enable them to offer something unique, when too many stores are selling the same merchandise. Some retailers have created several labels in an effort to appeal to a wider variety of shoppers.

d. Selling via catalog

Non-store retailing such as mail order, and e-commerce find increasing consumer acceptance, especially when the service fits the needs of the purchaser. Consumers value convenience, now that shopping is considered a chore rather than a recreational activity. Consequently, retailers are now increasingly tapping the home shopping market through catalogs, television, and personal computers. Saks Fifth Avenue is one of the many retailers that have branched out with mail-order divisions. It mails annually more than 35 million *Folio* catalogs in 25 different editions. Of the nearly two million customers in the store's database, more than 250,000 are active mail-order shoppers. Now catalog sales are growing at a slower pace, due to the rising costs of paper and postage and the competition of television shopping and e-commerce.

Clothes are the most common catalog purchase, and successful catalogs usually select fabrics and product designs for their markets. One of the reasons of the increasing success of home furnishings catalogs is the display of all merchandise in a residential setting, allowing consumers to visualize what a room would look if they purchased the merchandise as a group.

e. Selling online

Retailers and producers alike are taking online shopping seriously – both as an opportunity and a competitive threat. Now most major retailers must have at least a presence on the Internet. A Web site offers the opportunity to boost market share by attracting new customers. Many online consumers enjoy the convenience of being able to order products 24 hours a day, seven days a week, without having to go to a store. It's also easier to compare product information and prices from a variety of retailers without going to different stores. In addition, retailers can expand outside their traditional markets by targeting customers in regions where they do not operate stores. Online retailing also lowers the cost of business for retailers, with lower rent, payroll, and fulfillment costs compared to traditional in-store retailing. A Web site also complements the store and its image, and offers a retailer greater opportunity to develop and sell its own private-label goods.

2. DESIGNER/MANUFACTURERS**a. As market movers**

There are designers whose impact on the apparel, accessories, and home furnishings industries – worldwide – goes far beyond the size of their markets. Many apparel designers have no manufacturing operations. However, some of the most successful designers have majority control of several manufacturing companies, some joint ventures, many contractors, and licensees. All these companies produce merchandise marketed under the designer's label, with products ranging from ready-to-wear to leather goods, jewelry and home furnishings. In addition, some designers own a number of boutiques that carry their lines around the world.

Designers' top lines have a limited market, but establish a prestige image for their labels, which in turn brings lucrative licensing agreements. Such agreements insure

that licensees maintain proper quality levels, pricing structure and adequate distribution. Licensees, however, may not manufacture all the merchandise and subcontract other manufacturers for part of the production, offering opportunities to smaller producers, especially when handcrafted inputs are required.

b. As exporters

For decades, France and Italy have been major worldwide exporters of apparel, accessories and home furnishings, while U.S. designers relied for years on their home market as sufficient outlet for their products. Now many designers are following the example of Ralph Lauren who, in 1981, opened in London the first of a worldwide network of boutiques. His stores in Paris and London sell more on a per-square-foot basis than does his store in New York. Major retailers also are seeking growth through international expansion, exploiting the disappearance of geographic and economic borders in Europe and North America, and a growing middle class in many countries in Latin America and Asia.

C. RESULTS

1. Training

Participation and interest in NIEDA seminars and workshops were considerable. The positive comments in the *evaluation form* – distributed by NIEDA – indicate their impact. Copy of these forms have been submitted prior to this report.

2. Dissemination of information

The team's activities were frequently covered by newspapers, television, and radio (ANNEX III).

3. Market linkages

It is most significant that the handcrafted products presented have attracted, as of now, the keen interest of the following companies:

a. *Donghia*

This firm ordered samples from Tossivi in conjunction with Médard Hantan, Agnès Hekpazo Creation, and Sculpture Beau Bois. They also requested photos of René Gnahoui's paintings.

b. *Kim Seybert*

This company is interested in developing samples with Tossivi in conjunction with Médard Hantan, Agnès Hekpazo Creation, and Sculpture Beau Bois.

These companies will pay for the cost of samples and their delivery.

Meetings with other companies are scheduled for the end of January 2001.

IV. MARKET REACTION

What follows are evaluations and remarks of the experts and decision makers who examined the samples.

A. APPAREL WITH HANDCRAFTED INPUTS

Sample #1 (page 8)

All experts agreed that the quality of garment making is good. The hand painting is attractive and well executed, especially considering that the artist has never worked on synthetic material before⁸.

“Sophisticated and simple . . . very attractive”

“Very professional” (garment workmanship)

“It should have been silk”

“Great to see such good hand finishing . . . it shows great care”

“Neat workmanship . . . inside and out”

“What is the maximum size of fabric that can be painted at one time?”⁹

“There is a good market for hand painted silk scarves”

Sample #2 (page 9)

The garment is stitched well, the designs are attractive although not evenly stenciled, the colors need improving, and the fabric quality is poor.

“Well made, but all this work is wasted on inferior fabric”

“This seamstress knows quality, the painter is good . . . they need access to good fabrics”

“It shows an artist’s eye” (design motif)

“The colors are a bit dull and look washed out”

”How many natural colors are available?”

“Has this fabric been tested for light and wash fastness?”

Photos #3 & #4 & #5 (pages 10-11-12)

Importers are interested, in principle, in products made with domestic materials, since it lowers product costs. The export prospects of these fabrics to the United States are practically non-existent – despite low prices – in view of the designs, colors, and quality of fabric.

“You cannot beat Malaysia and Indonesia”

“Admirable work, but not for here”

“If this is what their home market wants, what else can they do?”

⁸ NIEDA could not find silk fabric in Cotonou.

⁹ Mr. Gnahoui painted the five meters required for the sample, but such size accounted for a number of stains in some areas. However, with practice and less time pressure, he should be able to paint at least four meters at the time without defects.

Sample #6 (pages 15-16)

The workmanship is fair, the styling shows flair, and every expert liked the distinctive hand crimped fabric. However, the process has to be perfected, since the holes left by the raffia are visible, and the color is not uniform. When perfected, the price would be fair.

“Great texture . . . great effect” (hand crimped fabric)

“I like the feel of it, the bas-relief effect” (hand crimped fabric)

“What a disco look for hip girls!” (outfit)

“That’s an incredible amount of hand work!” (both types of fabric)

Sample #8 (page 17)

Every expert liked the “brick” color and the use of natural dyes was considered a good selling point. The workmanship is fair, and the fabric quality mediocre. In the eye of many consumers, the tie-dye technique has become synonymous with inexpensive, splashy items like T-shirts.

“Good color . . . can it be wash or must be dry cleaned?”

“The *greens*¹⁰ would love anything dyed in natural color”

“Not your usual tie-dye design!”

Sample #9 (pages 18-19)

This outfit shows imagination in fabric development, flair for fashion design, and an ability to combine patterns and colors. Tie-dye makes an attractive fabric design for the garment top, especially in conjunction with fabric gathering. Ms. Hekpazo provides only textile prices – and not apparel prices – since the garment manufacturing aspect of her operation needs upgrading.

“Fun and sexy . . . a good idea”

“They show promise”

“Unusual fabric treatments”

Photo #12 (page 21)

Mr. Hounyovi has a wide assortment of the woven ribbon fabric used for this jacket. In addition, he can enlist the cooperation of many tailors in Cotonou, people he has been training over the last few years. Such cooperation would enable this fashion designer to considerably increase his present production capacity, now represented by only few workers. In time, several garment producers may group together to fulfill orders, if any given order were too big for a single producer, or even bid for Government procurement contracts. However, top retailers inspect production units before placing any meaningful order.

“Looks well made but it’s too expensive”

“This type of fabric makes alterations problematic”

¹⁰ Ecologically committed people

B. HANDCRAFTED ACCESSORIES

Sample #13 (page 22)

All experts agreed that the hand woven raffia looks fine, and that the styling is fair. However, it was pointed out that production of shoes for export requires a volume of production that it would be difficult for two or three shoe artisans to meet.

"Fine weave, nice color combination"

"Looks like a rather sophisticated operation, judging from the hangtag"

"They need quality upgrade . . . the shoulder strap is flimsy, without body"

C. HANDCRAFTED HOME FURNISHINGS

Sample #14 (page 23)

The appliqué work is excellent, the price is on the high side, the pillow is well made.

"Good workmanship, fine stitches"

"An attractive item"

"You can apply this skill to so many other products, like bedspreads"

"A direction to pursue"

Sample #16 (page 26)

This pillow shows good hand weaving skill, and a flair for design composition. The price is fair. However, the fabric could be softer and more pleasing to the touch. To expand the market of handloom fabrics, they must meet specific requirements as to widths and lengths for garment manufacturing as well as for home furnishings. Interior designers prefer fabrics 120-140 cm wide for maximum utilization. In Benin, there are only four looms that can weave fabrics of such width.

"Good workmanship . . . fair price"

"Good texture . . . fabric right for upholstery if in the right width"

"Good item . . . the fabric is a bit stiff, can they make it softer?"

Samples #17 & #18 (pages 27-28)

Pillows are an ideal item to introduce an interesting fabric to potential buyers, since they showcase the fabric for those who may envisage its application to different products. The comments regarding the fabrics are the same as those expressed regarding Samples #2 & #6.

Sample #19 (page 29)

This sample was developed to illustrate how the cooperation among different producers can bring about product differentiation. This lamp was made with the inputs of three producers, who plan to pursue such collaboration. The television coverage of the exhibit

could generate more local business for each individual producer. Realistically, lampshades made by an individual artisan could not easily find a U.S. market. On the other hand, lamp bases in prized woods could have a niche market, with the input of wood carvers and better finish. However, a market could be developed in Benin for distinctive lamps for the more affluent consumers, offices, and hotels.

“Beautiful wood, but not finished well”

“The price is rather high for this quality of workmanship” (lamp base)

D. HANDCRAFTED DECORATIVE ITEMS

Sample #20 (page 30)

This brass item is right for the tourist trade, and the price is fair. For the quality market, this artisan needs to upgrade the quality of finish.

“Decorative, but lacks details”

“Nice line, but the finish has to be better”

Sample #21 (page 32)

In Benin, there are many skillful wood carvers crafting the same range of products marketed in many other African countries. By and large, however, wood handicrafts are of a better quality in Benin, where mass tourism and mass foreign marketers have not yet affected quality standards as has happened in other countries.

“Good skill and good wood, but too expensive”

“Well crafted . . . but the wood was not seasoned enough! Don't they have kilns” ¹¹

“There is definitively a market for good hand carved kitchenware”

Photo #22 (page 34)

This stool is just an indication of the creative talent that exists in Benin. Wood carvers could apply their skill to a whole range of items, if provided with pertinent information about market trends.

“Lovely . . . and such beautiful wood”

”This is not furniture, it's sculpture”

Photo #23 (page 35)

This totem is one-of-a-kind piece for consumers who like impressive artifacts. In Benin, crafts retailers should recognize the need to educate consumers about the origin and meaning of products. The Centre de Promotion de l'Artisanat could provide its members with basic information about traditional skills and their role in society.

¹¹ At this point, the bigger and more beautiful bowl had cracked.

Each producer could then use relevant information to promote his/her specific products with hangtags or product card information.

“Striking”

“Right for the well-off visitor”

Photo #24 (page 36)

These panels show the creative talent and the level of skill that can be tapped for the top quality market with the support of the Ministère du Commerce, de l'Artisanat et du Tourisme.

“A very fine skill”

“Indeed, they are works of art”

V. TRADE POTENTIAL OF CRAFT-BASED GOODS

Based on the evaluations of the experts and decision makers, the overall conclusions on the trade potential of craft-based product groups can be summarized as follows.

A. MAIN PRODUCT GROUPS

1. Apparel with handcrafted inputs

Apparel is produced by a large number of small enterprises and individual tailors – mainly for the domestic market. Of the producers visited, few export regionally, while one – Agnès Hekpazo Creation – exports to France. The overall quality indicates that selected enterprises can be positioned to export better quality products, if provided with high impact technical assistance focused on production upgrade and product innovation. There is a market niche for garments made with handcrafted inputs, such as hand painting, hand dying with natural and chemical dyes, and appliqué work.

2. Handcrafted accessories

- a. Raffia products – The overall quality of hand weaving is fairly good – excellent in the case of the Centre Béninois de Métiers Traditionnels. This group could export hand woven raffia by the meter to U.S. producers, and market their finished products, handbags and shoes, to consumers in domestic and regional markets.
- b. Handcrafted silver jewelry – The quality of workmanship ranges from fair to good, especially with filigree work. Given their quality/price ratio, however, these items could not compete successfully with hand made jewelry produced in other countries.

3. Textile home furnishings with handcrafted inputs

All type of home furnishings, from curtains and bedcovers to decorative pillows, can be developed utilizing several crafts skills.

- a. Hand painting – Distinctive hand painted fabrics created by local artists, such as René Gnahoui, can provide apparel and home furnishing producers with a

competitive advantage over products made with mill made fabric, especially with the use of natural dyes (vegetable and mineral). However, such dying techniques need to be perfected, since colors tend to fade quickly with washing and even dry cleaning.

- b. Appliqué work – This widespread skill is used for decorative items, such as wall hanging and pillowcases decorated with traditional motifs – products marketed to tourists or at crafts fairs. With more innovative designs, this skill could be applied to home furnishings and apparel, targeted to the better quality market.
- c. Hand weaving – Hand woven fabrics can be used only for small home furnishings and fashion accessories – but not for apparel – since the majority of looms are only 45 to 60 centimeters wide.
- d. Batik and tie-dye – Such techniques are frequently used in Benin, at times with striking results. However, the worldwide utilization of such techniques for mass products precludes acceptance by the better quality market.

4. **Handcrafted decorative items**

- a. Brass items – Poor quality of finish and sameness of designs are weaknesses of this product group. Artisans need to expand their product range beyond ordinary reproduction of traditional pieces.
- b. Woodcarvings – Current production is geared to the tourist trade and regional trade fairs, but the quality market could offer a profitable niche for well-finished items, given the number of skilled artisans, and the variety of prized wood available, domestic and imported. However, finished products may crack with time, since the wood is not always sufficiently seasoned.

B. **CONSTRAINTS**

1. **Inadequate quality**

Understandably, most producers do not strive for quality, since their present market does not want to pay or even recognize quality. Producers who make quality products need to be encouraged and rewarded, and thus sensitize other entrepreneurs.

2. **Non-competitive price**

A number of products are unrealistically priced, since the majority of producers lack:

- Knowledge of how to cost
- Information about international competition.

3. **The one-time sale perspective**

Some producers seek lasting business relationships, while many others are primarily interested in making a sale. Such perspective accounts for a variety of problems – e.g. price, quality, and product specification.

4. **Availability of materials**

The quality of cotton fabric sold locally by Benin's textile manufacturers is not adequate for quality export products, obliging garment and home furnishings producers to import fabrics from the Ivory Coast. Such constraint results in higher costs and delays that can affect delivery time. Seasoned wood is a scarce commodity,

since it entails keeping capital tied up in materials. Economic necessity, however, can force artisans to use wood they know will crack.

5. Design

Practically every expert reiterated the need for styling input for the better quality market. Entrepreneurs themselves acknowledge their reliance on foreign designs.

6. Volume

Small-sized enterprises need to cooperate with each other in fulfilling orders that may exceed their production capacity. Orders may range from few dozens, with repeated reorders, to larger orders depending on the type of product. In general, initial orders are small, since importers test new suppliers to avoid the risk of finding themselves with empty shelves for late or no delivery

7. Lead time

For large U.S. retailers, distance can pose a problem, and some cut their sourcing time by importing merchandise from countries close to the United States. However, lead times vary with the type, uniqueness, and price/quality ratio of the merchandise.

C. EXPORT STRATEGY

1. Target product groups

The recommended action plan would target the following product groups with best potential, according to market feedback:

- Apparel with handcrafted inputs
- Handcrafted home furnishings
- Handcrafted decorative items.

An export breakthrough of Beninese handicrafts in a most visible and demanding market, such as the U.S.A., would spotlight all crafts, and lifts many other producers.

2. Quality at each price point

For some consumers, quality is a matter of status – a designer name, a good image, and even a high price indicate quality. For other consumers, quality is represented by the intrinsic characteristics of a product. The definition of quality, however, depends on whether a product is aimed at the mass, middle or luxury market. For a basic item, like a T-shirt, quality rests on factors like color fastness or minimal shrinkage. For a high-priced garment, quality is represented by such elements as matching fabric design, number of stitches per inch, buttonholes, and inside finish.

3. Differentiation

Product design and variety of selection are increasingly important as competitive factors in industrialized economies, and companies constantly strive to produce differentiated products attuned to today's lifestyles and demographic changes. Consumers' frequent complaint is that retail stores carry the same merchandise, prompting some manufacturers and retailers to offer unique, exclusive merchandise and to ensure the continuing availability of fresh, new selections. As a way to

differentiate themselves, a number of top retailers, such as Neiman Marcus, carry merchandise that cannot be found in other stores. This strategy offers smaller firms the opportunity to manufacture for retailers who seek some differentiation in their merchandise.

4. Product renewal

For sustained growth, product development has to be an ongoing process with new product lines presented regularly to present markets and – progressively – to new markets. It is necessary that producers continually update and adapt their product offerings to meet the challenges of their international competition. Companies win market shares by offering differentiated products other manufacturers will try to emulate.

5. Role of Artists

One way to differentiate products is to tap the talent of artists who “*are an economic good*” as J. K. Galbraith stated. The development of commercial products can provide artists with the opportunity to venture into new forms of expression – a challenge that can be very rewarding in economic terms as well.

6. Value pricing

Price is becoming a progressively significant factor in deciding a purchase. Value pricing is the retailing industry’s response to consumers’ demand for the right combination of quality, fair price, and good service. Price plays a big part in what consumers buy and where they buy it. Successful retailers’ strategy is to provide the selection and value that customers want, at prices they can afford. Producers who offer products of quality, in trendy and functional designs – at competitive prices – have the best opportunities for export, be the merchandise targeted to the upper, middle or low end of the market.

7. Market information

One of the critical elements in any product development plan is an understanding of market size and trends, combined with the ability to anticipate or create new trends. Awareness of what the market could accept, allows producers to seize opportunities and avoid the danger of the “hit or miss approach” in product development. With improved technology, retailers can better identify the buying preferences of the various groups of customers they serve. It is also important to understand the significance of shifts in the structure of a country’s population, because such shifts influence the demand for specific product groups.

8. The Domino effect

The linkages of Beninese producers with top U.S. designer/manufacturers would be significant not only for the volume of their orders, but for their impact on other U.S. manufacturers. In addition, the reputation of leading retailers, carrying merchandise made in Benin, would become an invaluable promotional tool with other retailers. Such implicit endorsement could be effectively used to position craft-based industries, and overcome the resistance that confronts new vendors from a country not widely known for quality consumer goods.

VI. ACTION PLAN

The action plan would entail the following tasks:

- Task 1 — Identification of qualified enterprises
- Task 2 — Identification of local NGOs
- Task 3 — Identification of support service providers
- Task 4 — Identification of sources of materials
- Task 5 — Selection of technical specialists
- Task 6 — Training
- Task 7 — Development of swatches
- Task 8 — Development of new business linkages
- Task 9 — Development of products
- Task 10 — Development of Beninese designing talent
- Task 11 — Buyers visit to Benin
- Task 12 — Production development
- Task 13 — Publicity program to attract visitors to Benin
- Task 14 — Market presentation
- Task 15 — Supervision of order fulfillment

Task 1 — Identification of qualified enterprises

Assistance would be targeted to those enterprises that can be more easily positioned to supply quality products to the U.S. market. The capability of participating producers is key to its success. If a producer failed to fulfill an order as specified, that enterprise would be blacklisted, and such outcome would influence market's perception of other producers. Excellence of skill alone is not sufficient to export – a firm's efficiency, size and resources are determinants in its ability to handle the complex task of timely delivery of merchandise, of consistent quality, in quantities, styles, and colors stipulated.

The recommended plan would include the following enterprises, grouped by their main activity:

- a. Apparel
 - Agnès Hekpazo Creation
 - Tossivi
 - Jean-Baptiste Hounyovi
 - Pepita Djoffon
 - Any Pascale
 - Bonaventure Tohon
 - GPHAB
 - La Référence des Costumes Italiens
 - Marcel Houessouvi
 - Lino N'Dasso
- b. Hand weaving
 - Espace Tissage Plus
 - La Finesse
 - Centre Béninois de Métiers Traditionnels
- c. Hand-painting on fabric
 - René Gnahoui

- d. Appliqué craft
 - Médard Hantan
- e. Batik
 - Abesil Teinture
 - Atelier de Batik "Saint Esprit"
 - Floride
- f. Hand carved wood items
 - Sculpture Beau Bois
 - Asiebe
- g. Furniture with hand carved components
 - Trameb-Benin
- h. Brass items
 - Avadra Gabin

Selection criteria — The selection of producers are based on these criteria:

- Excellence of skill
- Type/range of products
- Product quality
- Potential for upgrading
- Working facilities and equipment
- Potential for expansion
- Production flexibility
- Entrepreneurship

Location would also be a consideration, since technical assistance has to be provided – for logistical reasons – to firms clustered in a limited geographical area. Undoubtedly, enterprises in other areas of Benin would qualify for inclusion in the plan.

The challenge, however, is to obtain the greatest impact with available resources. Focusing on areas where there is a concentration of enterprises engaged in similar activities allows efficient utilization of expertise, thus lowering the cost of delivering technical assistance.

Producers, who do not yet qualify for inclusion in the plan, would be included subsequently as they upgrade their quality standards. Seminars and workshops could be held periodically to enable such participation.

Task 2 — Identification of local NGOs

In accordance with their resources and capabilities, the involvement of local NGOs would be a key element in the implementation of the entire plan.

Task 3 — Identification of support service providers

National and regional organizations could be involved in the program.

The objective would be to:

- Maximize program impact
- Transfer know-how
- Promote these organizations' services
- Establish cooperation among producers, NGOs, and private service providers.

Task 4 — Identification of sources of materials

The identification of the most cost-efficient vendors is critical to firms' competitiveness. Sourcing involves searching for materials required to meet production schedule and profit objectives in terms of specific quality, quantities, delivery dates, and costs. Important considerations include vendors' reputation, credit ratings, lead-time, minimums, and proximity. Innovation is also an important factor for high-end products.

Task 5 — Selection of technical specialists

Technical specialists would assist producers to meet the requirements of the quality market in the following sectors:

- a. Handicrafts sector
 - Home decor specialist
- b. Apparel and textile home furnishings
 - Pattern maker
 - Production specialist.

Task 6 — Training

To be cost-effective, technical specialists would impart:

- a. *In-factory training* – in product and production development – to rotating NGOs technical instructors, while they are providing technical assistance to producers at their production units;
- b. *Group training* in product and market development through workshops and seminars for interested producers, NGOs instructors, and Government officers.

Task 7 — Development of swatches

To begin the process of product development, craft organizations would develop new swatches embodying different skills and materials. Such swatch books would be presented to designer/manufacturers and retailers who would select the skills and/or materials best suited to their market niche. Development of new swatches would be an ongoing process, and their presentation would be timed with the planning stage of designer/manufacturers' new collections.

Task 8 — Development of new business linkages

From inception of the program, new business linkages would be established with designer/manufacturers of home décor and apparel, and with key retailers. Specifically, the tasks would be to:

- Present swatch books;
- Provide information about Beninese producers;
- Follow up with linkages already established;
- Establish new business linkages.

Designer/manufacturers and retailers could source:

- Handcrafted materials, such as appliqué work or woven raffia;

- Handcrafted components, embodying such skills as hand painting;
- Finished products, with handcrafted inputs, made according to their specifications;
- Existing handcrafted products, such as salad bowls.

Task 9 — Development of products

Technical specialists would assist each qualified enterprise with the making of a number of quality products in the categories in which it specializes. Such products would be:

- Based on designs provided by designers and/or retailers;
- Developed by producers in conjunction with technical specialists – products that would bear the producer's label.

Task 10 — Development of Beninese design talent

Technical specialists would identify and guide the most promising local product designers with the preparation of distinctive items. Some of these items would be included in the market presentation to begin to build name recognition for Benin's creative talent.

Task 11 — Buyers visit to Benin

While products are being developed, two or three key buyers would be invited to Benin, for one week, to meet producers, visit facilities and preview products. The main objectives of such visits would be to:

- Pre-sell
- Establish direct market linkages with retailers
- Obtain feedback on product lines.

Task 12 — Production development

While technicians are assisting each firm to make prototypes of differentiated products, they would also plan production, which includes the determination of the sequence of operations for each product as well as the production time for each operation. In addition, technicians would identify potential bottlenecks that would affect order fulfillments.

These experts would transfer the know-how necessary to make production as efficient as possible, to insure quality and cost-effectiveness. Specifically, the main tasks would be to:

- Estimate and control production costs
- Schedule work flow and production
- Train workers
- Establish a quality control system
- Set up procedures for packing, shipping, billing, etc.

Task 13 — Publicity program to attract visitor to Benin

The new product lines would be publicized with news and photo releases to stimulate interest. Editorial publicity – product coverage in editorial columns – is one of the least

expensive, but most effective communication tools. The public believes information presented as news – through print, radio, and television – while it remains skeptical of paid advertisements.

To promote other industries simultaneously, publicity kits would include pictures of products photographed against Benin's tourist attractions and resorts.

Task 14 — Market presentation

When a cross section of reliable, qualified producers is lined up, arrangements could be made with a U.S. trend-setting retailer, which could hold a Beninese promotion in their stores. Such special event would provide exposure for many consumer products, such as jewelry.

Task 15 — Supervision of order fulfillment

Once orders are placed, technicians would supervise the fulfillment of each order, from production to shipping. The task is to meet customer requirements – on-time delivery of merchandise of consistent quality, manufactured according to specifications.

VII. EXPECTED PLAN RESULTS

1. **U.S. increased awareness** of market opportunities in Benin.
2. **Increased awareness** in Benin of market niches for quality handcrafted products targeted to the:
 - U.S. market
 - EU market
 - Domestic and regional markets.
3. **Other benefits** would include:
 - Endorsement of Beninese materials and skills by top U.S. retailers and designer/manufacturers;
 - Enhanced capability to develop competitive, higher value-added new products;
 - Enhanced quality standards and productivity;
 - Enhanced marketing capabilities of producers, individually and as a group;
 - Employment generation;
 - Increased cooperation among Beninese producers;
 - Enhancement of services provided by NGOs;
 - Mobilization of other producers.

ENTERPRISE PROFILES**ANNEX I****TOSSIVI**

Year established: 1984

Main activity: women's and children's wear

Number of workers: 5

Equipment: 9 sewing machines

Production: 60 units/month

Capacity utilization: 100%

Export markets: none

AGNÈS HEKPAZO CREATION

Year established: 1990

Main activity: home furnishings, apparel, hand input on industrial fabrics (tie-dye, crimping and dying with natural and chemical dyes)

Number of workers: 25 permanent, 250 part time

Equipment: 15 sewing machines, 4 specialized machines, 50 dye vats

Production/year: 1,500 apparel units, 10,000 home furnishings pieces, 50,000 meters of textiles

Capacity utilization: 60%

Export markets: France

ESPACE TISSAGE PLUS

Year established: 1993

Main activity: textile and raffia hand weaving, home furnishings, accessories

Number of workers: 6 weavers, 4 stitchers

Equipment: 6 looms, 10 sewing machines

Capacity utilization: 100%

Export markets: France, Burkina Faso

Showroom: La Caverne de l'Artisan

MÉDARD HANTAN

Year established: 1990

Main activity: appliqué work on home furnishings and accessories

Number of workers: family enterprise

Equipment: not applicable

Capacity utilization: 70%

Export markets: trade fairs in Burkina Faso, Senegal, France

RENÉ GNAHOUI (artist)

Artisanal activity: textile hand dying and hand painting with natural dyes

Number of workers: 1 assistant

Export markets: Burkina Faso, France

SCULPTURE BEAU BOIS

Year established: 1993

Main activity: wood carving (home furnishings and decorative items)

Number of workers: 8

Export markets: France, USA

TRAMEB-BENIN

Year established: 1996

Main activity: office and home furniture

Number of workers: 8 permanent, 4 part time

Production/year: 200 table sets

Capacity utilization: 20%

Export markets: Nigeria, Burkina Faso

ATELUM

Year established: 1960 (by father)

Main activity: electrification, lamp shades, lamp assembly

Number of workers: 1 (owner)

Equipment: hand tools

Export markets: Burkina Faso

AVADRA GABIN (individual artisan)

Main activity: brass decorative items

Equipment: hand tools

Export markets: Burkina Faso

COST-PLUS PRICING METHOD

ANNEX II

DATE _____

STYLE # _____

TYPE OF PRODUCT _____

Category	Item (description)	Quantity	Unit cost	Total cost
Materials				
Labor @ _____ minutes				
Overhead				
Cost of production				
Producer's markup @ _____ %				
Producer's selling price				
Retailer's markup @ _____ %				
Retail price				
Value Added Tax @ _____ % (if applicable)				
Retail price including VAT				

ANNEX III

PRESS COVERAGE

FRATERNITE

QUOTIDIEN BENINOIS D'INFORMATION ET D'ANALYSE

N°226 du mardi 31 octobre 2000 - 1^{ère} année - PRIX: 200FCFA

SEMINAIRE SUR LA PROMOTION DES PRODUITS LOCAUX

L'Ong américaine Nieda relance le Bénin dans le commerce international

La première phase d'une série de séminaires sur la promotion des produits de fabrication artisanale «made in Benin» s'est déroulée hier sur l'initiative de New ideas for export développement aid (Nieda), une Ong nord américaine. C'était au Sheraton Hôtel à Cotonou en présence de M. Gino di Grandi son président.

EUGÈNE LAKPOMÉ

Intensifier le commerce international de produits artisanaux fabriqués par les petites, moyennes et microentreprises. C'est l'objectif que vise la "Nieda" en organisant le séminaire sur la promotion des produits locaux hier dans la salle Evasion du Sheraton Hôtel à Cotonou. Plus d'une centaine d'artisans ont suivi avec grand intérêt, l'exposé de M. Gino di Grandi, président en exercice de l'Ong. Ce dernier n'a ménagé aucun effort pour attirer l'attention des participants sur les diverses possibilités par lesquelles les producteurs peuvent améliorer la productivité de leurs produits de manière à les rendre assez compétitifs sur le marché international. En pédagogue averti, M. Gino di Grandi s'est servi des projections cinématographiques pour partager avec son auditoire, les expériences effectuées par Nieda pour aider certains pays à s'imposer sur le marché des produits manufacturés. Des exemples sont cités dans le rang des pays du monde en développement tels l'Inde, la Côte d'Ivoire et, entre autres le Bangladesh. Monsieur di Grandi focalise l'attention des participants sur des produits textiles, le cuir, les boissons, la bijouterie, les produits cosmétiques et parfums, sans pour autant prétendre fermer

la liste. Selon le président de Nieda, la chance du Bénin dans cette nouvelle donne de promotion tient plutôt à l'originalité de ses produits, originalité qu'on ne peut d'ailleurs retrouver nulle part ailleurs. Dans son exposé, l'expert américain en marketing international a accordé son vif intérêt avec des entreprises de

produits. Celles-ci faisant partie intégrante des activités de Nieda. Les participants ont procédé ensuite au remplissage d'un questionnaire d'évaluation qui permettra aux experts de cibler les différents domaines d'activités dans lesquels Nieda pourrait intervenir en leur faveur. La deuxième phase prévue pour le 03 novembre prochain serait plus pratique et permettra aux artisans d'exposer les échantillons de leurs produits en vue de recevoir les observations appropriées de la part des spécialistes de Nieda.

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FRATERNITE

QUOTIDIEN BENINOIS D'INFORMATION ET D'ANALYSE

N°229 du lundi 6 novembre 2000 - 1^{ère} année - PRIX: 200FCFA

PROMOTION DE LA CONSOMMATION LOCALE

La qualité des produits au centre des préoccupations

Le séminaire sur la promotion des produits de fabrication locale entamé le 30 octobre 2000 poursuit ses travaux. Vendredi dernier dans la salle «Évasion» du «Sheraton Hôtel» à Cotonou, l'Ong américaine «Nieda» a intéressé la centaine de participants sur la définition de la qualité des produits.

EUGÈNE LAKPOMÉ

Tout a commencé vendredi matin par l'exposition des échantillons des produits que les participants ont eux-mêmes amenés dans la salle de conférence. Textile, boisson, objets d'art. Autant de produits étalés devant un auditoire assez organisé et réellement décidé à conquérir le marché international par son savoir-faire artistique. Cette deuxième phase du séminaire animée par M. Gino di Grandi, président de Nieda assisté de MM. Aldo Selvi et Pietro Bianco, était un véritable rendez-vous du donner et du recevoir. Au moyen d'approches participatives, l'auditoire et les trois experts de Nieda ont procédé à un diagnostic systématique de la production artisanale au Bénin afin de dégager les maux qui l'empêchent d'affronter la concurrence mondiale.

Le styliste Pietro Bianco relève à cet effet, l'improvisation, l'inadéquation des machines aux processus de

fabrication, l'aspect grossier des produits comme les graves écueils qui affectent la compétitivité de la production artistique et artisanale du Bénin. «L'un des problèmes majeurs de l'artisanat béninois, se trouve au niveau du design», reconnaît le président Gino di Grandi.

Quant au styliste Pietro Bianco, il s'est montré plus exigeant sur le design et n'a pu s'empêcher de formuler des critiques fort constructives sur l'emballage des boissons. M. Bianco reproche à nos producteurs de boissons locales, le fait qu'ils se permettent de recycler de vieilles bouteilles dont ils ne disposent d'ailleurs pas suffisamment de moyens pour stériliser. Le Vice-président Aldo Selvi conseille en l'occurrence aux sculpteurs de prendre désormais soin d'étiqueter leurs produits en les signant avec l'année de fabrication tout en limitant le stock sans pour autant faire nullement mention du pays où ils sont fabriqués. La rencontre a per-

mis aux uns et aux autres de s'instruire auprès des experts de Nieda en vue d'améliorer la compétitivité des produits. Le président Pietro invite les auditeurs à étudier la démographie du marché en tenant grand compte du sexe, de l'âge, de la population et de

la classe d'âge des consommateurs. Cet aspect de la question se rapportant à l'étude du marché sera passé au peigne fin lors de la prochaine phase du séminaire prévue pour le 13 novembre prochain.

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BENIN ^{LE} NOUVEAU IS

200F CFA

Quotidien indépendant - Autorisation N° 343/MISAT/DC/DAI/SCC du 23/05/2000

1ÈRE ANNÉE - NUMÉRO 0009 DU VENDREDI 17 NOVEMBRE 2000

LES PRODUITS D'ARTISANAT

Du marché de village au marché mondial

ABOUBAKAR TAKOU

La Niéda désigne les nouvelles idées pour l'aide au développement des exportations. Cet idéal qui vise à rendre plus efficaces les services d'exportations est à l'actif d'une équipe de quatre experts actuellement en séjour à Cotonou. Le principal objectif est d'intensifier le commerce international de produits d'artisanat, vêtements et accessoires, articles d'ameublement et de cadeaux fa-

briqués par des petites et moyennes entreprises. Pour Ginodi Grandi, fondateur et président de Niéda, les fabricants béninois peuvent soutenir la concurrence avec succès en créant des articles commercialisables à caractère original, afin de conquérir des tranches du marché mieux protégées où la concurrence soit moins forte et offrant une plus grande marge bénéficiaire. Le groupe en séjour au Bénin jusqu'au 22 novembre 2000 est très reconnu sur le plan mondial dans le secteur de l'habillement en cuir de haute qualité. Les exportations indiennes de cuir et d'articles en cuir sont ainsi passées de 398 millions de dollars à 640 millions en moins de deux ans, effectuant un bond de la cinquième à la première place sur la liste des principales exportations du Pays. Au Bénin, l'équipe a prêté une assistance technique à une gamme diverse de petites et moyennes entreprises de Cotonou. Les produits seront exposés le 22 novembre prochain au Bénin Shératon hôtel, puis emportés à New-York pour établir des relations d'affaires entre les sociétés américaines et les producteurs béninois.

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BENIN ^{LE} NOUVAIS

Quotidien béninois indépendant
N°343/MISAT/DC/DAI/SCC du 23/05/2000

1ÈRE ANNÉE - NUMÉRO 0013 DU JEUDI 23 NOVEMBRE 2000

200F C

LA NIEDA AU SHERATON HIER ...

Réussir une mission

Hier au Sheraton Hôtel un quorum statuait sur les Nouvelles idées pour l'aide au développement des exportations (Nieda). Le rendez-vous a permis à l'équipe de Ginodi Grandi de toucher du doigt les réalités créatrices des artistes Béninois et Ivoiriens. Il a ainsi envisagé de faire savoir toutes les pratiques pour améliorer les performances en matière d'exportation.

BELLY KPOGODO

Créé en 1987, cette structure à but non lucratif a semblé jouir d'une longue expérience dans le dévelop-

pement des marchés et des filières textiles. Dans cette vision prospective qui consiste à intensifier le commerce international de produits d'artisanat, vêtements et accessoires, le Bénin a assez de chance avec les talents hors pair de ses représentants.



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LE POINT

Bénin 200 FCFA
Zone Uemoa 400 FCFA

AU QUOTIDIEN

Quotidien béninois indépendant d'Informations et d'Analyses

ARTISANAT AU BÉNIN

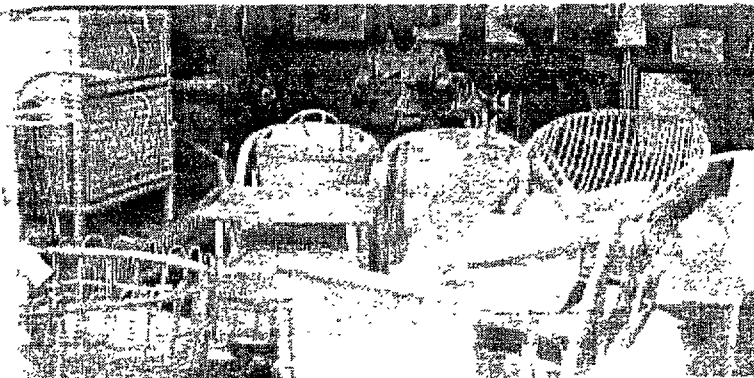
Assister techniquement les talents nationaux

L'association américaine Nieda (Nouvelles idées pour l'aide au développement des exportations) a organisé hier un séminaire à l'intention des artisans béninois. C'est le Bénin Shérathon hôtel qui a servi de cadre à ce rendez-vous dont l'objectif est d'aider les talents béninois à être plus compétitifs sur le plan international.

Abdoulaye SOUMANA

Les artisans béninois ont de grandes potentialités mais leurs produits sont très peu connus du reste du monde. Il faut relever le niveau des aptitudes pour faire la différence en vue d'élargir le marché. Voilà la quintessence de l'intervention de Gino di Grandi, président de l'association Nieda, à l'issue de ce séminaire ayant pour thème «viser le haut de gamme».

La richesse de l'artisanat béninois n'est point à démontrer. A Gino di Grandi s'est d'ailleurs inspiré des œuvres de Béninois pour faire son exposé. Des talents tels que René Gnahoui, Agnès Hekpazo, Raymonde d'Almeida etc... existent et leurs œuvres à base de teinture végétale avec l'empreinte du savoir-faire de Nieda ne font que susciter envie. Ensemble 2 pièces ou 3 ; habits de nuit, coussins, veilleuse sont des créations de ces artistes nationaux qui forcent admiration et suscitent le désir de s'en



Le Bénin: une richesse artistique incontestable

procurer.

Plutôt que de mode, c'est du style dont il a été surtout question. D'autant plus que pour être compétitif sur le marché international, il faut jouir de l'excellence technique.

Et c'est justement à cela que l'association américaine s'attèle. Créée en 1987, Nieda met ainsi à la disposition des artistes un savoir-faire pratique pour améliorer les performances d'exportation. Elle fournit aussi des renseignements fiables sur les créneaux porteurs et sur les dispo-

sitions à prendre pour améliorer les échanges commerciaux. Forte de sa longue expérience dans le développement des marchés et des filières, ses projets, exécutés en Amérique, en Asie (Inde), en Afrique (Ghana), ont été couronnés de succès. Les artisans béninois doivent donc saisir cette opportunité pour améliorer leurs prestations, sortir de l'anonymat et aller à la conquête du marché international où il n'y a pas de place pour la médiocrité. □

FRATERNITE

QUOTIDIEN BENINOIS D'INFORMATION ET D'ANALYSE

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PROMOTION DES PRODUITS D'EXPORTATION

Le secteur textile préoccupe les Américains

Le secteur textile béninois intéresse les hommes d'affaire américains. C'est l'essentiel de ce qu'on peut retenir du séminaire que l'Ong «Nieda» a eu l'honneur d'animer hier dans la salle «Evasion» de «Sheraton hôtel» de Cotonou en présence de plus d'une centaine de participants.

EUGÈNE LAKPOMÉ

Une gamme d'échantillons de costume homme et dame «made in Benin» installés devant l'auditoire attire le regard dès l'entrée à la salle de conférence. Il s'agit de tenues dont la carrure dépasse la consommation locale. «Un béninois pourrait acheter ces produits à Paris et en offrir à ses amis à Cotonou de manière qu'on les considère pour made in Italy». A entendre ce témoignage de la bouche d'un participant, on est en mesure d'apprécier toute la compétitivité des productions textiles surtout celles relatives à l'habillement au

niveau de la concurrence internationale. Ces produits ont été sélectionnés par l'équipe d'experts de «Nieda» qui envisage les présenter aux milieux d'affaires américains. M. Gino di Grandi, animateur principal du séminaire promet retourner lesdits échantillons à Cotonou dès que les structures compétentes des Usa fixeront les prix de vente appropriés. Là, les couturiers de Cotonou auront une appréciation concurrentielle sur la valeur de leurs marchandises sur le marché global, a souligné M. di Grandi. Le président de «Nieda» qui reproche aux producteurs de la place, le bas niveau du prix

de vente de leurs marchandises, a fait part de la disponibilité de son association à maintenir le contact avec les autorités béninoises en vue d'aider les artisans nationaux à améliorer la qualité de leurs prestations pour une valeur normale, compétitive. Cela, dit-il, dépend de la volonté de coopération entre les Usa et les décideurs politiques de Cotonou, explique M. di Grandi. Par ailleurs, les communicateurs invitent les producteurs à sortir du cercle trop restreint du Bénin afin de se mettre régulièrement en contact avec leurs homologues de la sous-région ou même de l'environnement mondial pour un meilleur rayonnement de leurs activités. Des vagues d'acclamation çà et là expriment la grande satisfaction des artisans sur la mission de «Nieda» à Cotonou.

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200 F LE JOURNAL

Quotidien Béninois indépendant d'informations - RCPC 295 MISAT/DC/DAI/SCC - LE JOURNAL N° 331 DU JEUDI 23

GRUPE NIEDA

Pour une politique de promotion et de commercialisation de produits d'exportation

Hier, au Shératon Hôtel, l'association américaine NIEDA (Nouvelles Idées pour l'Aide au Développement des Exportations) en collaboration avec l'USAID a organisé un séminaire sur les techniques de mise au point de promotion et de commercialisation de produits d'exportation.

Pamphile ZINSOU-PLY

L'association NIEDA se distingue par son approche intégrée du développement des marchés et des produits. Créée en 1987, cette association à but non lucratif jouit d'une longue expérience dans le développement des marchés et des filières, ce qui explique le succès des projets d'exportation exécutés aux Amériques, en Afrique et en Asie. Beaucoup d'hommes d'affaires béninois et étrangers sont venus à ce grand rendez-vous du donner et du recevoir. Les séminaires et ateliers organisés par l'association NIEDA offrent le savoir faire pratique pour améliorer les performances d'exportation, fournissent des renseignements fiables sur les créneaux porteurs et sur les dispositions à prendre pour améliorer les échanges commerciaux. La séance qui a eu lieu hier, au Shératon Hôtel a permis aux participants de découvrir les créations de Agnès Hekpazo, de Raymonde d'Almeida puis de René Gnahoui. C'est aussi l'occasion pour les artisans béninois, de situer le blocage de l'internationalisation de leur métier. En effet, beaucoup se sont pris au ministère du Commerce, du Tourisme et de l'Artisanat, qui ne fournit aucun effort, pour promouvoir le secteur de l'artisanat au Bénin. Depuis la création de ce

ministère en 1978, les autorités politico-administratives ne s'intéressent qu'aux secteurs du commerce, générateur de bénéfice et du tourisme, occasion de voyage. " C'est bien déplorable et a découragé " a affirmé un participant. Selon, le communicateur du séminaire, les travaux du NIEDA, ne vont pas s'arrêter là, ils seront

poursuivis, en vue de pousser, l'artisanat béninois sur le marché international. Pour ce faire, recommande, le communicateur, les artisans du Bénin doivent travailler, pour se montrer talentueux, utiliser une méthode technique qui permettra d'accéder au marché international. L'expérience qui est entrain d'être faite au Bénin, a été tentée aussi ailleurs dans la sous-région ainsi qu'en Aide et cela a marché. C'est une preuve que si les béninois s'unissent et définissent les bases d'un travail bienfait, ils réussiront à reconstruire l'assistance. ■

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Quotidien béninois indépendant - RCPC N° 261 / MISAT / DC / DAI / SCC

POLITIQUE Liberté P. 5

Séminaire de la Niedo sur les produits d'exportation

Pour relever le niveau de la qualité des produits artisanaux

Amener les artisans à relever le niveau de la qualité de leurs produits. Tel est l'objectif visé par les responsables de l'association américaine Niedo (Nouvelles idées pour l'aide au développement des exportations) en organisant hier à l'Hôtel Sheraton de Cotonou un séminaire à l'endroit de quelques artisans béninois.

P. H.

Ils sont une cinquantaine d'artisans des domaines tels que le stylisme et la mode, la menuiserie, la sculpture, la bijouterie, le tissage traditionnel et autres à suivre ce séminaire d'information et de sensibilisation sur les techniques de mise au point, de promotion et de commercialisation des produits d'exportation.

En procédant à son ouverture, le représentant au Bénin de l'Agence américaine de développement Usaid, M. Harry Lightfoot Sr a salué l'initiative

des responsables de Niedo pour avoir choisi le Bénin. Il s'est dit assuré que les artisans béninois tireront les meilleurs intérêts de ce séminaire en ce qui concerne l'exportation de leurs produits. Le directeur de Niedo, M. Gino Di Grandi dans sa communication a d'abord fait l'état des maux qui minent le développement des activités artisanales dans les pays du tiers-monde. M. Di Grandi s'appuyant sur un échantillon de produits «made in Bénin» a montré que l'artisanat béninois regorge de potentialités qu'il faut seulement développer. «Le monde occidental n'a pas besoin des choses qui existent chez eux, mais de produits nouveaux. Il faut faire des choses qui proviennent des réflexions de votre identité. Dans cette oeuvre, la médiocrité n'a pas droit de citer ; c'est l'excellence technique qui compte le plus», leur a-t-il dit.

Prenant à la fin la parole, les artisans ont apprécié la démarche de Niedo en leur offrant le savoir-faire pratique pour améliorer les performances d'exportation, en leur fournissant des renseignements fiables sur les créneaux porteurs et sur les dispositions à prendre pour améliorer les échanges commerciaux. Ils ont aussi émis le voeu que ce séminaire se répète à l'avenir.

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