

# Artisan Story #1

## Tropical Salvage

[ Indonesia ]



*Left: Tropical Salvage employees  
transport a recovered tree.*

## Old Wood, New Use, Positive Change

**Visionary businessman Tim O'Brien is determined to make a difference. Aware of the ecological and social devastation caused by the mismanagement of Indonesia's old-growth forests, O'Brien founded Tropical Salvage – a private Fair Trade company that tackles environmental challenges by creating wood furniture using production processes that contribute to positive social, economic and environmental change.**

### **Destruction of Indonesia's Forests**

The world's forests play a critical role in maintaining global climatic stability. In Indonesia, irresponsible logging practices and unregulated clear-cutting of old-growth forests have caused flooding, droughts and the endangerment of numerous species, including rich stores of pharmacological plants. Extensive soil erosion and

the silting of lakes, rivers, streams and shoreline ocean ecosystems have also resulted.

If the loss of forests continues it will mean a decline in jobs and communities traditionally dependent on forest life. Practical alternatives must be developed to replace the destructive lumber-harvesting methods currently used in the developing world. Tropical Salvage is one such alternative.

### **Tropical Salvage – a Model of Environmental and Economic Sustainability**

Tropical Salvage uses five principal wood salvage strategies: reclaiming wood from demolition sites where old buildings, houses or bridges have been razed or deconstructed; salvaging ancient, wild-growth trees



*Above: Tropical Salvage founder Tim O'Brien stands next to a previously entombed giant.*

from rivers and lakes; salvaging trees felled by floods and landslides during Indonesia's intense rainy season; salvaging diseased and old trees culled from coffee, cacao and fruit plantations; and, unique to Tropical Salvage, mining trees from beneath the ground, where for centuries caches from species-rich primary forests have lain buried as a result of volcanic eruptions.

Tropical Salvage provides well-paid job opportunities to Indonesians who would otherwise face economic hardship. Operating two warehouses, the company hires exceptional carpenters, carvers, and finishers who are excited to be part of a visionary operation that works for environmental and economic betterment. The organization makes it a priority to raise environmental and cultural awareness among both employees and local communities. Besides fair wages for their work, Tropical Salvage employees receive medical benefits and free noon meals.

## **Innovation at Work – Reforestation Project in Jepara**

Currently, with strong support from the local community, Tropical Salvage is helping to fund and implement a conservation, education and reforestation program in collaboration with The Institute for Culture and Ecology. Land has been purchased near their production facility in Jepara and is being reforested with native species. A public forest park and environmental education facility have also been created.

Tropical Salvage aims to build partnerships between communities, schools, businesses, civil servants, military personnel and politicians – bringing leaders together to discuss the environment. "It is exciting and very motivating to be a part of shaping and implementing reforestation and local economic enablement initiatives," says O'Brien.

## **The Responsibility of Businesses**

Tropical Salvage believes that the business community must take the initiative in addressing contemporary challenges to our world's social and environmental integrity. Tropical Salvage's mission is to create equitable, reliable, eco-positive jobs in places experiencing economic hardship; to implement conservation, forest restoration and environmental education projects to protect the world's remaining primary tropical forests; and to advocate for responsible social and environmental practices throughout the business world.



## **Did you know?**

### *Indonesian Biodiversity*

Indonesia is located in the Malay Archipelago – a string of 18,108 islands stretching along the equator between Indochina and Australia, 6,000 of which are inhabited. Home to a wide range of exotic plants and wildlife, including tigers, elephants and Komodo dragons, these lush islands are recognized as a major world centre for biodiversity.



# Artisan Story #2

## St. Mary's Mahila Shikshan Kendra

[ India ]



*Left: St. Mary's employs women of all religions and castes stitching traditional embroidery.*

## Empowering Women, One Stitch at a Time...

**Stitch by stitch, the remarkable Indian women of St. Mary's transform hand-woven cotton into embroidered works of art. Working together "as one family," this group of religiously diverse women specializes in creating stunning Gujarati embroidery featuring glittering mirror-work and intricate motifs – a craft dating back over 1,000 years.**

### Indian Embroidery

Embroidery has been a popular art form throughout India for centuries. The Gujarat and Rajasthan regions in western India are renowned for their fine embroidery and their incredible range of decorative needlework. Indian embroidery displays a wide range of varying techniques and designs. Each caste and village community has its own distinct designs, colours and styles of stitching. Beautifully

embroidered pieces featuring beadwork and appliqué, patchwork compositions, varying thread colours, diverse motifs from geometric patterns to floral designs, and mirror-work – a particularly popular style – are just a few of the styles characterizing Indian embroidery.

### St. Mary's Gujarati Embroidery

The women of St. Mary's Mahila Shikshan Kendra – a Catholic charitable organization located in Ahmedabad – specialize in Gujarati style embroidery. Most women in the western region of Gujarat are already skilled in embroidery traditions featuring mirror-work, beading and geometric patterns and motifs inspired by daily life. Gujarati mirror-work embroidery is traditionally prepared as a dowry for young women; it is local custom for women to decorate skirts, wall hangings and bedspreads to give to their daughters on their wedding day. Such embroidery is



*Above: St Mary's artisans embroider handwoven textiles using traditions and designs that have been passed from one generation to the next.*

also sold in the night market of Ahmedabad, where light from local lanterns reflects mirror work embroidery in a spectacular display.

At St. Mary's, approximately 400 full-time and 100 part-time artisans are employed making traditional embroidery. All of the raw materials used by the group are locally produced. The centre purchases hand-loomed cotton cloth and thread made in the area, providing vital income to local weavers and their families. Both the fabric and embroidery floss are then prepared at the centre where there is a tailoring workshop – vegetable dyes are used to create a wide variety of rare and beautiful colours. A woman at the centre is in charge of preparing bundles of cloth and thread to be picked up each week by the artisans.

## **Making Change from Home**

Embroidering from their homes, the women create their work while caring for their families and carrying out domestic duties. After stitching traditional elephant, peacock, flower and fern designs, pieces of mirror glass are cut and sewn onto the textiles, adding sparkle and elegance to the fabric. Once the women have finished decorating, washing, and drying the fabrics in the hot sun, they come to the centre twice a week to bring in their completed items and to pick up supplies for new pieces. At the workshop, other artisans then transform the completed fabrics into beautiful cushion covers, wall hangings, tablecloths, and handbags. Approximately 80% of these products are sold abroad while the other 20% are sold on local markets.

## **Did you know?**

### *Textiles Worth Investing In*

Today, approximately 500 women are employed by St. Mary's embroidery program, which is now recognized as a Diploma Course by the Indian government.

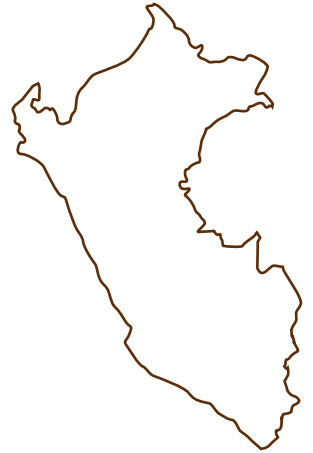
The pieces produced by St. Mary's reflect and preserve the distinct traditions and cultures of the women who make them. Fair Trade groups like St. Mary's directly benefit these gifted women by allowing them the opportunity to work from home while tending to their daily domestic duties, caring for their children, and carrying out agricultural work. Nearly 40% of St. Mary's women are the major wage earners for their families – the creation of Gujarati embroidery enables them to earn a stable income and build a sustainable livelihood.



# Artisan Story #3

## Allpa

[ Peru ]



*Left: Jewellery-maker  
Francisco Portal Palacios  
displays his work.*

## Diamonds on the Soles of His Shoes: The Journey of One Peruvian Jeweller

**Gifted Peruvian artisan Francisco Portal Palacios has become an expert in the art of fine jewellery-making. His journey, however, has not always been easy. After making his way to Lima from the provincial northern highlands, Francisco struggled for years to earn a living as he honed his skills. In the innovative artisan group Allpa, he has discovered an organization that allows him to earn a sustainable income while focusing on the quality of his craft.**

Francisco's story begins like that of so many other rural Peruvians – in hardship. Despite the country's abundant mineral resources and burgeoning economy, fluctuations in the market and an uneven distribution of wealth have meant that 45% of the population lives below the poverty line, the majority of whom are located on the outskirts

of major cities and in small villages in the mountain and rainforest regions.

### Faith and Circumstance

Born in the highlands of Oyón Province, Francisco lost his father when he was just 9 years old. At the age of 16, aspiring to escape the crippling poverty of the countryside, he moved to the capital city of Lima to begin employment as a cabinet-maker but was unable to acquire a knack for the trade. He soon took a leap of faith in order to pursue a dream that he'd long been fostering in secret.

"I took a decision that changed the course of my life," he said. "I built a shoeshine box and went to look for my jeweller uncle. I knew only that his name was Eladio Portal."



*Above: A weaver with artisan group Allpa works on traditional Peruvian textiles.*

## Did you know?

### *Allpa's mission-statement*

To serve as a connection between artisans and the international market, provide the training and support to improve techniques in production. To achieve this goal, Allpa imports international design experts and educators to train their artisans in techniques and production methodology for textiles, silver jewellery and wooden products. Additionally, artisans are provided with short and mid-term loans to fund workshop development.

For two long years, Francisco toiled on Jirón Chancay Street shining shoes, selling wares on the corner, sleeping where he could find shelter, and asking passers by if they knew Eladio Portal. He was amazed one morning to discover that a regular customer was in fact his cousin. She directed him to his uncle's workshop. He was greeted with open arms.

## Apprenticeship, Setbacks and Mastery of the Craft

Under his uncle Eladio's tutelage, Francisco acquired the techniques of jewellery-making. With determination and dedication he honed his craft, gaining experience with precious stones, plaster and gypsum casting. He went on to work for a Swiss jewellery company and eventually opened his own independent workshop where he learned the skill of embossing and developed other techniques, such as carving birds from onyx stone. At first the work went well, but when he invested the entirety of his savings in a failed project for the recovery of ore tailings in Oyón, Francisco was forced to return to Lima to start from scratch.

It wasn't until Francisco discovered Allpa that he found the opportunity he had been looking for. The long journey for Francisco has finally paid off. For the last ten years, he has specialized in creating jewellery for Allpa. Profits were initially small, so he supplemented his income with sales at the touristy Av. La Marina handicraft market in Lima. Today Francisco receives steady orders from Allpa, enabling him to take pride in earning a fair and sustainable income.

## A Leader in his Community

Parallel to his work for Allpa, Francisco has devoted himself to the organization of craftsmen unions. He has promoted projects using the resources of the Mining Canon, a Peruvian law mandating that 50% of the taxes generated by mining activities be returned to the regional and municipal governments which operate the mines. These projects include the implementation of crafts schools to train young Oyón residents in the specialties of jewelry, silversmith, weaving and wood carving.

What began as a leap of faith when he was young has changed Francisco's future. "I fought to find my uncle," he says, and "jewellery is now my whole life."



# Artisan Story #4

## Comité Artisanal Haïtien

[ Haiti ]



*Left: Artisans with Comité Artisanal Haïtien receive free literacy education, and accounting, product costing and business management training.*

## Building a Sustainable Local Economy

**While almost 40 percent of the economy in Haiti is supported by foreign aid, many Haitians are striving to make an independent living. Comité Artisanal Haïtien (CAH) is working to make this possible. A non-profit marketing cooperative, CAH represents more than 800 Haitian artisans in 170 workshops who create cut metal art, river rock sculptures and carved wood crafts.**

Originally founded in 1973 by several church groups to help rural craftspeople sell their wares in Port-au-Prince and to help reduce the flow of migration from the countryside to the city, CAH exports crafts from individual artisans, cooperatives, groups and family workshops. For many, the money earned is often the sole source of support for the artisans and their families, helping build local economies by enabling rural artisans to earn a living from their skills.

When Gisele Fleurant became the group's director in 1980, CAH began to flourish. "My dream," Gisele says, "is that artisans in Haiti will earn a decent wage every month. But there are no basic services in Haiti," Gisele explains. "I haven't had electricity in my house for the past four months." Because of such limitations, CAH has had to invest in an expensive generator simply to keep the office running.

Infrastructure is not the only impediment to development – while education in Haiti is technically compulsory and free, the government does not pay teachers, and only 40 percent of children can afford the supplemental fees, supplies and uniforms required to attend school.

CAH plays a critical role providing economic opportunities for Haitians by linking artisans with local and international Fair Trade markets. In addition to providing fair wages



*Above: Jhonson Augustin is a skilled cut-metal artisan and workshop leader with CAH.*

## Did you know?

### *Cut-Metal Sculpture*

“Cut-metal work represents the wealth of Croix des Bouquets,” says Augustin. “This is what has made the city famous.” Artisans and apprentices make a living from creating art out of recycled metal drums. “Even apprentices can make enough to go to school, or to care for their children if they are parents,” he says.

and advances on orders, CAH offers financial assistance for health emergencies. With outside funding, the group now offers free programs where literacy, basic accounting, product costing and business management are taught.

Sales of Haitian crafts through Fair Trade organizations like Ten Thousand Villages make these personal development opportunities and income generation possible. The value of such opportunities is priceless. “Everyone can give you money,” Gisele says, “but not everyone can see your emptiness and make you whole.”

## Jhonson Augustin Of Comité Artisanal Haïtien

Jhonson Augustin was still a public school student when he began training in metal work. Augustin took responsibility for his 11 siblings when his father left Haiti. “I needed to learn something [to earn an income],” he says.

Augustin’s home town, Croix des Bouquets, is renowned for its cut metal work, and Augustin was fortunate enough to apprentice with highly-esteemed artist Serge Jolimeau, “one of the most caring master artisans” according to both Augustin and Gisele Fleurant.

Augustin has since gained a reputation as a skilled cut-metal artisan and now trains other young apprentices, who start with the “rough” work of cutting open the metal drums used as raw material, then sanding and varnishing the finished products. Gradually, they move on to tasks requiring more skill.

Currently, Augustin’s workshop supports some 50 families. Of himself, Augustin says, “This is what God gave me to live; I support my family, I am building a house and I am providing work for others.”

## One Mountain at a Time

The economic situation in Haiti is bleak, and the need for income generation is great. Despite this, Haitians have an abundance of determination. As the Haitian proverb says, “Déyé món, gen món,” meaning, behind the mountains there are more mountains.

We will always be faced with problems that need solving; no problem is too big to undertake, even when the mountains are social and political. Comité Artisanal Haïtien (CAH) demonstrates how to tackle problems, one mountain at a time.

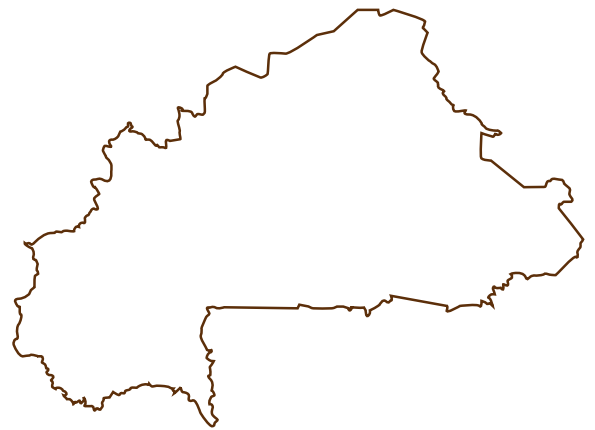




# Artisan Story #5

## Women Producer's Union Of Shea Butter Products

[ *Burkina Faso* ]



*Left: Abibata Ido - "Shea is the husband of widows and the father of orphans."*

## The Shea Tree: Soul of the Culture

**The shea tree is essential to the lives of women in Burkina Faso. More than merely a source of livelihood, it is a vital partner in both tradition and transformation.**

Tradition holds the shea tree to be sacred. Only women may touch it or harvest its fruit; ill fortune is believed to befall any man who does the same, a taboo that has protected the tree from deforestation, ensuring that its deep roots continue to anchor the soil against the wind and stand guard as a buffer against the Sahara's relentless encroachment.

In Sissili province, one third of all women are involved in shea butter producer groups. The opportunities provided by these groups are essential. The cost of schooling is beyond the means of most families, and those who can afford tuition often send only their male children; an estimated

88% of rural Burkinabe women are illiterate and possess limited technical skills.

To address this urgent need, producer groups offer technical training, literacy and marketing classes, marketing opportunities through trade fairs, and a pooling of resources to allow the purchase of presses that reduce the amount of work involved in butter production.

Producer groups provide access to export markets, allowing women to sell an entire year's harvest in one batch at a substantially better price, women who would previously have toiled long days at local marketplaces to realize only a minute return on their work.

However, the most significant benefits are perhaps the least quantifiable: because the income earned through shea butter sales constitutes a significant proportion of



*Above: Léonie Ziba spreads shea nuts on the ground to dry.*

## Did you know?

### *The Shea Tree*

The Shea tree is vital to life in Burkina Faso. Butter derived from its hard nut constitutes a dietary staple, its oil aids spiritual cleansing in religious ceremonies, its leaves are placed for protection at the threshold of homes where a child is being born, and its healing and regenerative properties offer skin protection against the region's unforgiving climate and relief from wounds and aching joints.

family earnings, woman producers gain greater influence in their households, meaning that the extra earnings allow daughters to attend school, or fund the purchase of bicycles to facilitate transportation.

Producers also enjoy the social interaction afforded by time spent with other women – an opportunity to discuss day-to-day problems with peers.

## A Shea Producer's Story

Abibata Ido is, by all accounts, a remarkable woman. A widowed mother of five, she was removed from school before graduation and placed in an arranged marriage to a man chosen for her. She is now motivated to ensure that her own children have access to the education and freedom that she was denied.

That passion impelled Ido to help in the formation of both her local shea producer group in 1997 and its umbrella organization, the Women Producer's Union of Shea Butter Products (UGPPK-S/Z). She has remained a dedicated leader since then as a Union board member, visiting the local offices daily to participate in meetings and offer support to other producers.

She has been in charge of her union's quality control since its inception, ensuring that all products – from almonds to butter to soap – meet the union's high standards. "It's important to follow all the stages and assure good hygiene to maintain our quality," she says. "Good quality attracts good clients."

Of the change the union has made in the lives of local women, Ido adds, "Before, we sold our butter at the market in balls at 25 for 5 francs. The profits weren't there every day; we could leave the market without even 100 francs (\$0.25 Cdn). Now that we produce in groups, our revenues are superior; we can purchase school supplies, food and medicine."

Her involvement in the producer's union has made for life-altering change in the lives of many of the region's women, enabled her to purchase a small motorcycle and given her the capacity to farm her own rice. Despite the many advantages offered by producer's unions, they do not provide an absolute solution; but they are essential and life-changing. By providing Burkinabe women with collective bargaining power and access to foreign marketplaces, they offer the path to a better future.



# STATE OF THE VILLAGE REPORT

## **If the world were a village of only 100 people, there would be:**

60 Asians,  
14 Africans,  
12 Europeans,  
8 people from Central and South America, Mexico and the Caribbean,  
5 from the USA and Canada, and  
1 person from Australia or New Zealand.

## **The people of the village would have considerable difficulty communicating:**

14 people would speak Mandarin,  
8 people would speak Hindi/Urdu,  
8 English,  
7 Spanish,  
4 Russian,  
4 Arabic.

This list accounts for less than half the villagers. The others speak (in descending order of frequency) Bengali, Portuguese, Indonesian, Japanese, German, French, and 200 other languages.

## **In the village there would be:**

33 Christians,  
22 Moslems,  
15 Hindus,  
14 Nonreligious, Agnostics, or Atheists,  
6 Buddhists,  
10 all other religions.

## **In this 100-person community:**

80 would live in substandard housing.  
67 adults live in the village; and half of them would be illiterate.  
50 would suffer from malnutrition.  
33 would not have access to clean, safe drinking water.  
24 people would not have any electricity.  
Of the 76 that do have electricity, most would use it only for light at night.  
In the village would be 42 radios, 24 televisions, 14 telephones, and 7 computers  
(some villagers own more than one of each).  
7 people would own an automobile (some of them more than one).  
5 people would possess 32% of the entire village's wealth, and these would all be from the USA.  
The poorest one-third of the people would receive only 3% of the income of the village.

## **The following is also something to ponder...**

If you woke up this morning healthy ... you are more blessed than the million who will not survive this week.

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the fear and loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pain of starvation ... you are better off than 500 million people in the world.

If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep ... you are more comfortable than 75% of the people in this world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace ... you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

If you can read this, you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world who cannot read at all.

**When one considers our world from such a compressed perspective, it becomes both evident and vital that education, acceptance and compassion are essential for the progress of humankind.**