

The Women's Pearl Initiative

The Fumba Peninsula of Zanzibar is home to three coastal villages where local women harvest sea life such as oysters and cockles for food and to develop livelihood opportunities. There has been a recent decline in the mollusc population because of uncontrolled harvesting so the Women's Pearl Initiative was created by CRC, WIOMSA and IMS to develop small-scale commercial pearl farming and jewelry trade opportunities promoting coastal management, environmentally friendly livelihoods and small business development. Mabe farmed half pearls, mother-of-pearl jewelry and seaweed soap are all sustainable livelihood products grown and produced by these women.



The women in this program have some entrepreneurial characteristics and are eager to produce quality mother-of-pearl jewelry but they lack some of the basic business and marketing training need for microenterprise sustainability. They specifically need help with quality control, packaging design, marketing collateral, sales training techniques, pricing strategies and more importantly development of distribution channels for the oyster shell jewelry. However, with small numbers of pearl harvests to date and limited availability, CRC should consider orchestrating a yearly public relations campaign in Zanzibar to generate interest and sales of a few high end pearls with the rest sold at auction in Tanzania and in the United States.

It seems the women are producing jewelry on an individual basis and learn from each other but would probably do better if they had some type of organizational structure where a management team, production and sales specialization opportunities can occur. Some jealousies have manifested themselves on how to equally distribute resources among the three villages but the natural development of three entrepreneurial women Akiwa, Rachma and Sophia have given rise to new business enterprises. The first two are sisters but all three have several small businesses in operation.

These women would do well with some management training and support on ways to run business enterprises. They could easily be the managers and best sales representatives for the Women's Pearl Initiative. Rachma has been learning Italian numbers and sales terms as part of fine tuning her negotiation techniques. Sophia hired 2 women from the local village, the day after we completed our first marketing workshop, where we discussed staffing needs, operations and specialization to expand business. In fact these 2 women were not seen at the next workshop because they were busy making jewelry for Sophia.



Sophia the most prolific of the entrepreneurs sells mother-of-pearl jewelry, sandalwood soap and masala tea to several NGOs and non-profits to include the Menai Bay Conservation Authority, Women & Youth Ministry and WIOMSA on consignment and to academic tourists groups sponsored by these organizations. Rachma sells jewelry and kangas on the beach to Italian tourists on Kwale Island where Safari Blue takes them for swimming and boat tours.

The three women also had a booth and sold products at the Dar es Salaam International Trade Fair and they plan to attend similar trade fairs in Kenya. Their ability to sell to these organizations is quite entrepreneurial but they should also focus sales on international tourists, gift boutiques and high end hotels and beach resorts so they are not so reliant on professional researchers from IMS for future profits.



More importantly the women should flesh out sales channels to reach these potential markets. The women need assistance to establish regular buyers especially with support from WIOMSA and IMS scientists such as Dr. Narriman Jiddawi and Dr. Aviti Mmochi who have worked with them on livelihood projects over the last two years. However, these scientists are working extremely long hours so potential marketing assistance is limited. Especially when trying to manage their own research along with helping these women and supervising visitors who want to learn about these livelihood projects at the same time.

This is a very popular mariculture activity with international recognition and educational tourists coming from all over the world to view the Women's Pearl Initiative. During our two

week visit, Drs. Jiddawi and Mmochi spent a fair amount of time explaining the value of the program to educational filmmakers from France, Veterinarian students from the U.S. and educators originally from Japan. The scientists could use some assistance with organizing guest visits. Perhaps standardized fees could be used to make this a self-sustainable activity offering village tours, educational programs and workshops with a focus on conservation and ecotourism. The monies could go towards the women, program development, educational institutions involved, and for the researchers when they deliver presentations.

The women have an immediate need to find jewelry suppliers locally especially in Stone Town to meet potential demand. The women could produce large quantities of product but without steady supplies this could be a problem. The women also need business model training to include production capacity, economic capability and sales potential. There are no historical economic indicators to date showing production or sales history. This makes it difficult for business planning purposes.

For now, production should be evaluated every 2 weeks and the women should be considered pooling their resources to buy supplies as they become cheaper when purchased in large quantity. Sound financial planning is needed and WIOMSA and IMS personnel should help establish initial sales channels especially in the boutiques, hotels and beach lodges.

Stone Town gift boutiques like Memories of Zanzibar, One-Way, Zanzibar Gallery and Secrets are tourist shops that might be potential sales venues for the oyster shell jewelry and half pearls produced by the Women's Pearl Initiative. These stores sell jewelry designed from shells, beads and other island products along with handmade natural soaps, spices and fabric purses which could easily be reproduced by the village women but in their own designs.

In fact, Secrets even had a Mabe pearl drop necklace on a leather choker for \$80.00. The women would be required to produce higher quality packaging with their jewelry for these stores to consider selling them. Packaging such as rattan enclosures, mesh bags with insert cards and marketing brochure highlighting the hand-made, genuine shell and quality value of the jewelry are needed.

The women have started to make mesh jewelry bags after some of the recent packaging workshops but they ought to develop their designs further. The pink and white paper background packages with plastic covering are not appropriate for most sales situations if the women want to project high quality products. It might be beneficial to give the women a tour of the boutique locations so they can see the products sold in these stores.



The Saifa Art Shop up the street from the Zanzibar Serena Inn is also a potential sales location for the mother-of-pearl jewelry. The store features hand-made jewelry, clothing and gift items designed by artists and small business enterprises in Tanzania including a women’s Maasai group. Most products have nice marketing brochures and are displayed to obtain premium prices. The owner was interested in viewing some of the jewelry and marketing materials related to the Women’s Pearl Initiative.

The Zanzibar Serena Inn in the tourist section of Stone Town (www.serenahotels.com) is a luxury ocean front hotel with a gift shop with glass display cases that feature fashion jewelry, Tanzanian arts and crafts, and fine jewelry pieces. The displayed items could use some updating but this would be a great location to feature jewelry and marketing brochures highlighting the Women’s Pearl Initiative. The sales associate in the gift shop seemed to think the Inn might be interested in selling mother-of-pearl jewelry.



Other hotels of interest would include the Fumba Beach Lodge (www.fumbabeachlodge.com) part of the Menai Bay Conservation Area and the Karamba Resort (karamba@zanlink.com) in Kizimkazi. The owner of the Fumba Lodge was eager to see quality jewelry pieces from the Women's Pearl Initiative but stressed he wanted accompanying marketing material that told a story about the women.

The owner was also interested in village tours and ways to show his guests how the jewelry is made whether this includes a viewing of the oyster nurseries or the women come to the hotel to sell products on a weekly basis. He was looking for local experiences for his guests that included a high engagement factor. There is also plenty of room in the lodge gift shop for jewelry, soap and tea products similar to what is sold by Sophia.



MAASAI

The Maasai are among the best known African ethnic groups, due to their distinctive customs and dress. As nomadic pastoralists they used to move their great cattle herds for seasonal rotations across the open savanna between Kenya and Tanzania.

This traditional land tenure system has preserved the natural environment where nowadays national parks and other popular tourist destinations are located.



Today the Maasai struggle to preserve their values and customs while they face poverty, land alienation, environmental degradation and HIV/AIDS.



Women and children work for hours to collect water and ferment skills. Livestock keeping alone can no longer ensure a viable life.

New livelihood strategies are needed to overcome the constraints of poverty and misery in Maasailand while protecting the natural resources on which the Maasai traditions profoundly rely.

PROJECT Women

For centuries beaded jewellery has been a mark of beauty and prosperity among the Maasai tribes of Eastern Africa.

Today it represents the possibility for many Maasai women of Tanzania to establish a business that reflects and celebrates their rich cultural heritage while improving their livelihood and protecting environment.

The project Maasai Women Art supports an informal network of Maasai women's groups located in Morogoro, Tanzania to integrate into development and to overcome poverty by improving their access to education and income generation opportunities.

Since its beginning the project has supported adult education courses for disadvantaged women and has fostered Maasai traditional bead and leather skills for the production of marketable products as alternative income in poor rural areas.

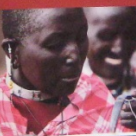
Thanks to the project outcomes women have decreased illegal addictive activities and they are now independently managing a common fund for the development of the organisation and the welfare of the producers.

PRODUCTS Art

Maasai Women Art products are fair trade and environmentally friendly. The project guarantees fair working and trading conditions to Maasai women and encourages better environmental practices.

Each piece is an imaginary journey through the culture of African savannah and is created out of the traditional skills of Maasai women combined with the creativity of Italian designers.

Request our catalogue at: info@maasaiwomenart.it www.maasaiwomenart.it



Wonder Workshop

The Wonder Workshop is a group of disabled men and women who create innovative art using recycled waste materials. It was set up in 2005 with funding from the EU in collaboration with local NGOs and donors from Italy and elsewhere.

By purchasing a Wonder Workshop product you are not only getting a sustainable opportunity of work for the disadvantaged people, enabling them to have a sustainable source of income & a better standard of life.



You are very warmly welcome to visit and buy from our workshop. It is open to the public, please visit us on:

Monday, Friday, 8:30am-12pm
Saturdays, 10am-12pm (closed Sun & public holidays)

Workshop: P.O. Box 100, St. Ignace, Morogoro, P.O. Box 100, Morogoro, Tanzania. Tel: +255 22 2622222. Fax: +255 22 2622222. Email: info@wonderworkshop.org

Our Range



Handmade baskets, bags, shoes, hats, jewelry, and other products made from recycled waste materials.



Each product is made with care and attention to detail, ensuring a high quality and durable finish.

For more information, please contact us at info@wonderworkshop.org