



*a Project of*  
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Maya Educational Foundation**  
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## **Quarterly Status Report April, May, June 2009**

### **Summary:**

- **Workshops**
  - Leadership Assembly (Panajachel)
  - Rug Hooking (Panajachel)
  
- **Collaborative Projects**
  - Como Foundation - Sewing Program
  - Building a NEST - Loan Program
    - First product delivery
    - Future natural dye workshops
  - Sharing the Dream workshop series part III - Colors and Tendencies (San Juan Comalapa)
  
- **Community Visits**
  - Group Organization (Tree Exercise) - All groups
  - Vision Work- All groups
  - New Group Progress (San Antonio, San Pedro, Xeabaj II, Cajola)
  - Potential New Groups (Totonicapan, Chimaltenango, Santiago)
  
- **OB in Progress**
  - Program Planning and Evaluation
  - Goals and Objectives - IAF Grant
  - Development Coordinator
  - Website Creation
  - Wish List

## Workshops

**Leadership Assembly:** On April 23, we held our annual leadership assembly. 2 representatives from OB's 16 original groups participated in this all-day workshop in Panajachel. The themes from the workshop included, a diagnostic study of each group, group problem solving, and creating a vision. Follow-up from the assembly will include a series of trainings on group administration and the formulation of a vision statement.

**Rug Hooking:** In June, we were delighted to host a rug hooking workshop taught by artist Mary Anne Wise who graciously volunteered her time. 3 representatives from 6 different groups attended the workshop. The beauty of these rugs is that they are created using recycled materials. The material hooked into the base is old clothes cut in to thin strips. The workshop was a big hit all around. The enthusiasm and gratitude from the women left Mary Anne with an experience not to be forgotten and the women were so thrilled about learning the new skill they couldn't put the work down at the end of the day. We are currently discussing follow-ups.

## Collaborative Projects

**Como Foundation – Sewing Program:** We are happy to announce that the Como Foundation has agreed to continue funding our sewing program this year. The program will focus on skill building for groups who have already participated in basic sewing skills. The goal at the end of the program is that they are able to function as a sewing group and produce quality products. The participating groups include Patanatik, Chirijquiac, San Rafael, Vasconcelos, and Los Morales for a total of 50 women. Two additional groups, Santa Clara and Nahuala have solicited basic sewing classes and would like to purchase machines through our micro-credit loan program. They are not included in the sewing program but we will consider the solicitations for the future.

**Building a NEST Loan Program:** The four groups who are participating in the NEST pay-back-with-products loan program have delivered their first of four orders. Each group weaves one specific design that NEST then has made into products like tote bags, journals, and purses. Unfortunately the process of working with the groups on this first order has not gone as smooth as any of us had hoped. For some reason, the groups had trouble creating the design and using the colors they were assigned to. Without giving a detailed account of the complications, we'll just say there have been many lessons learned. OB will visit the groups to reiterate what needs to be done and address any further concerns.

On a brighter note, NEST has raised funds to send 12 more women from the same four groups to a week long natural dye workshop at the Indigo Arts Center in Antigua to augment their natural dyeing ability. NEST director and board members will attend the workshops to meet the women and do design work with the colors from the natural dyes. The workshop is slated for September at which time the groups second order is also due.

### **Sharing the Dream Workshop Series Part III - Colors and Tendencies:**

Sharing the Dream is hosting a series of five workshops in 2009 to help artisans promote their products. In the beginning of June, three OB fieldworkers and a few women attended the workshop held in San Juan Comalapa at the Flor de Campo community center entitled colors and tendencies. Participants learned how to combine different colors and find inspiration for new designs. OB will incorporate aspects of each of the five workshops when developing themes for community visits.

### **Community Visits**

**Group Organization:** Group organization is one of OB's four focus areas and a theme that needs consistent reevaluation for the groups. This workshop was created as a prelude to our upcoming series on group administration. It examines what is meant by a well functioning group. The workshop includes an exercise where the women build trees using natural resources. What kind of tree represents your group? We presented this workshop to only a few groups that really needed it and then decided that all the groups could use a refresher course.

**Vision Work:** In follow-up to the leadership assembly, we created a workshop on forming a vision. We discovered from the leadership assembly that none of the groups have a vision statement or have even thought about what they wish to accomplish within their group aside from make money. The workshop includes a relaxation technique to get the women focused on the theme. Some groups actually had the chance to form their vision during the workshop. All our participating groups, including the new groups, have received or will receive this workshop.

**New Group Progress:** Thanks to continuing support from the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation, OB will proceed as planned with the program for our new groups. In Xeabaj II, last year's newly-formed candle-making group, we presented our new group participation contract. After careful listening and analysis, the group accepted and signed the contract. These women are making great strides in becoming better organized and are looking forward to continued support from OB in capacity building. For the next community visit, we will work with the group on a vision statement.

In Cajola, we agreed to also meet with a group of women who raise chickens. They received an introduction to the project and have been evaluated. Since their productive activity is vastly different from the weaving and sewing group, we will meet with each group separately but on the same day. One of our fieldworkers will meet with the weaving group while the other is with the chicken farm group. The evaluation revealed that they are eager to learn skills in group administration especially in organizing work schedules and administration of funds.

The San Antonio group has been a great success so far. The women are very enthusiastic about learning to produce a natural shampoo using medicinal plants. Because of the distance, OB fieldworkers spend a total of two days in the area. The first day is focused on a productive activity and the second day focuses on group organization and administrative skills. In the first set of workshops, they learned the basics about medicinal plants and a variety of remedies for common illnesses. We have also done the vision work with this

group. For the next meeting in July, they will produce the natural shampoo and receive a workshop on what makes a good leader.

San Pedro, on the other hand, is having some trouble keeping the group organized and is currently under close analysis regarding continued participation in the project. For the past couple months, we have had trouble getting all the group members to meet at the designated time and place. Our OB fieldworker visited each participant in her home separately and determined that the need is not as great in San Pedro as with other communities. The women all have a variety of their own small businesses and therefore seem to have difficulty with the concept of working together as a group. A third try to bring the group together is scheduled in July. At this meeting, we hope to understand better exactly what is occurring and determine if both parties are meeting each others expectations.

In July, we will introduce the OB project to four potential new groups. As mentioned in the last quarterly report, the group located in Totonicapan recommended to us by an organization called We Improve Tomorrow, and the women in Chimaltenango who are currently working with Sharing the Dream on product quality and development are scheduled for an OB presentation. We are also meeting with two groups in Santiago Atitlan who are survivors of hurricane Stan and lived in the now defunct community of Panabaj. These women weavers were involved in a huipil restoration project to get them working again after losing all their belongings to the mudslides of Stan. The project slowly disintegrated and has not been active for the last two years. OB is investigating the possibility of re-igniting these groups in hopes that they will eventually create new opportunities.

## **OB in Progress**

- **Program Planning and Evaluation:** We hired a Guatemalan Social Worker with years of experience working for formal organizations and with groups of women to personally train OB fieldworkers to develop a systemized way of planning and evaluating the community work. As OB reaches out to more women, this is absolutely necessary for the continuation of the project. Keeping better track of progress and showing results of our work is an area that we are persistently trying to improve.
- **Project Development:** We are happy to announce a new member to the OB team. Maya Moore starts on July 13 and will be taking on the new position of Development Coordinator. Her responsibilities will include proposal writing, researching new donors, writing progress reports to existing contributors, creating presentations and seeking venues for talks, developing fair trade daily tours to the communities, and investigating a location for a fair trade store (see our goals and objectives for the next three years), developing a volunteer program and developing and maintaining our website. We look forward to her much needed support.
- **Goals and Objectives (3 years) – IAF Grant:** Nearly completed is our proposal to the Inter-American Foundation to support OB operating expenses and programs. In the proposal, we seek funding for a three-

year program laying the groundwork for sustainability of the groups and of the OB project which is outlined in our goals and objectives.

- **Website Creation:** In other great news, OB has begun creation of a website. The information is rather basic for the moment since there hasn't been enough time to work on it but soon the Development Coordinator will take over this task. Please feel free to check out the progress and let us know what you think. The address is: [www.oxlajujbatz.org](http://www.oxlajujbatz.org).
- **Wish List:** OB is in need of a digital camera to create photo archives of our projects and a slide projector to show presentations and give introductions of our work.

Thank you for your continued support!

Ramona Kirschenman  
Project Director  
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