



*a Project of*  
**Asociación Tejedoras Unidas (Komon Ajkem) & Maya Educational Foundation**  
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## Quarterly Status Report January, February, March 2009

### Summary:

- **Workshops**
  - Basketry (Panajachel)
  - Natural Dye (Antigua)
  - Promotion Methods for Artisan Products
    - Labeling and Market Analysis (Guatemala)
    - Costing (Santiago Atitlan)
- **Sewing Instruction and Machine Micro-Credit Program**
  - End of basic sewing class/commencement second level classes (Chirijquiac)
  - End of machine embroidery classes (Patanatik and Santiago)
  - New requests for sewing classes and machines (Santa Clara, Vasconcelos, Morales)
- **Community Visits**
  - Natural dye follow-ups and Building a NEST loans (Chuacruz, Vasconcelos, Los Morales, San Rafael)
  - Various Themes:
    - Group RE-Organization (Nahuala)
    - Administration of Funds and Quality Control (Xeabaj II)
    - Labeling and Market Analysis follow-up (Chuaperol)
    - Group Organization and Production Analysis (Nimacabaj)
  - New Group Contracts (San Antonio, San Pedro, Cajola)
- **OB in Progress**
  - Archives and Resources
  - Project Development
  - 2009 Leadership Assembly
  - Wish List

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“I remember when I was young and just learning to weave. It was so exciting to learn the skill. The natural dying is like going back and starting from the beginning, from before I learned to weave. I feel so proud to now have this new skill that my people before me had, in the beginning,” Antonia commented during OB’s natural dye follow-ups in her community Chuacruz. In so many words, for Antonia natural dying is creating the weaving from scratch using natural resources available to her, as was in the weaving tradition, generations before her.

## Workshops

**Basketry:** In January, OB fieldworkers participated in a set of basketry workshops hosted by Maya Traditions. Artist Michelle Hament visited for the third time to provide advanced workshops to the basketry making groups (Santa Clara (8), Patanatik (12), Quiejel (5), El Adelanto (19), and Xeabaj (15).) These workshops focused on quality control and creating new designs.

**Natural Dye:** Also in January, OB fieldworkers and two women from four groups participated in a week-long workshop on natural dying at the Indigo Textile Arts Center in Antigua. The center was started by local natural dye expert, Olga Reiche.

**Promotion Methods for Artisan Products:** Sharing the Dream is hosting a series of five workshops at different locations in 2009 on promotion methods for artisan products. OB fieldworkers will attend the five workshops and replicate the themes with various OB groups. In January, the theme was labeling and market analysis and in March the theme was calculating costs.

## Sewing Instruction and Machine Micro-Credit Program

Chirijquiac completed their first set of basic sewing classes. Most of the 16 women who participated in the class decided to continue to the next level and are currently taking classes in part II. The group agreed to pay half of the cost for the class and materials.

11 women from the Patanatik group and 6 women from the Santiago group finished the machine embroidery class, also agreeing to pay half the cost of the class. If funding permits, both groups would like to participate in a third level class in order to create quality products and begin generating income as local seamstresses and for export products.

We now have new requests from women for sewing classes and machine loans from the Vasconcelos (5), Morales (15), and Santa Clara (7) groups. OB is in the process of seeking funds to cover these new classes as well as third level classes for the Patanatik and Chirijquiac groups.

## Community Visits

OB's community visits this quarter included an array of different themes depending on the specific group's progress and needs.

**Natural Dye Follow-ups:** In Chuacruz (22), Vasconcelos (11), Morales (19), and San Rafael (30), we conducted follow-ups to the natural dye workshops. The two women from each group who participated in Antigua, supervised by OB fieldworkers, taught the new skill to the members of the groups. The women were excited to experiment with this new skill. The only downside to natural dying is the amount of smoke created by the fires. It's a bit hazardous to one's health since the whole process involves about five days of work, much of that spent boiling. It is recommended that one use an industrial stove, but of course the communities don't have that kind of access. However, the groups would be happy to accept industrial stove donations.

The natural dye workshop was completely paid for by the groups through a loan program with the organization Building a NEST. This is the first time ever in OB's history that a participating group has fully paid for their own training. In order that the loans do not become a burden for the women, NEST has a program where the loans are paid back in products instead of cash. In addition, when it's payment time, NEST orders more than the amount due so that the women always have a little extra income. Essentially, NEST is a new client for these women with potential future sales once the loan is paid back.

**Various Themes:** Nahuala (23) is a group that had not been living up to the production levels of Mayan Hands (MH) for quite sometime and has had continuing conflicts between group members. OB is in the process of helping them through a series of visits in group RE-organization.

Xeabaj II, last year's newly-formed candle-making group, is in the process of receiving community visits on administration of funds and quality control, two themes most urgently needed for the group. Xeabaj II began generating income from candle sales but have no experience in managing group funds. Also, the decorative candles they learned at the end of last year need more focus on quality if they are ever to sell them in foreign or local markets. In addition, while making the candles, there was a lack of hygiene and care for the materials. OB will visit them each month regarding these themes until May, at which time we will present the group with a participation contract for one year.

Chuaperol (12) received the labels and marketing follow-up from the Sharing the Dream workshop and are now in the process of creating a new logo for their group. And, in Nimacabaj, the focus this visit was on group organization, and production analysis of new products.

**New Group Contracts:** Three of OB's potential new groups, San Antonio (10), San Pedro (16), and Cajola (16), all agreed to sign our participation contract which includes monthly visits to the communities over the next year. San Antonio wants to produce natural products, like shampoo, and hopes to participate in the sewing machine micro-loans in the future. The San Pedro group weaves and sews their products from start to finish, in other words they don't send products to a third party for finishing. Cajola are also weavers and sewers but they weave on foot-pedal looms. The San Sebastian (10) group has had trouble getting organized and has decided not to participate at this time.

We now have two other groups waiting in the wings for our project. One is in Totnicapan recommended to us by an organization called We Improve Tomorrow. The other is a group of women from various departments in Guatemala who relocated to Chimaltenango after the war. They are currently working with Sharing the Dream on Product Development and could use workshops on group organization and building strategies. OB is in the process of seeking funding for continued, consistent programs with our new groups.

## **OB in Progress**

- **Archives and Resources:** Throughout this quarter, we have spent quite a bit of time creating an archive of OB's work over the past five years. We are also collecting more data and materials to have our own small resource library in order to become an all-encompassing level of support for the women.

- **Project Development:** OB received an anonymous grant earmarked specifically towards developing the project and creating a website. We are in the process of hiring a volunteer Development Coordinator from the states to come and work with us on fundraising and grant writing. Her commitment is for a minimum of a year and she will receive a small monthly stipend to cover her living expenses. Also, we are happy to announce that we have a new brochure thanks to the Maya Educational Foundation who designed it. (see attached)
- **2009 Leadership Assembly:** The OB team is in the process of creating our leadership assembly for 2009 to be held in Maya Traditions workshop space in Panajachel. This year's assembly will be a testing ground for a new series of community trainings on group administration. The themes are: division of responsibilities, decision making, management of funds, and group development. The objective is laying the groundwork for sustainability for OB's original 16 groups. Two women representatives from each group are invited to come.
- **Wish List:** On a final note, OB is in need of a computer for the new Development Coordinator and a digital camera to create photo archives of our projects.

Thank you for your continued support!

Ramona Kirschenman  
Project Director  
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