

Towards Innovation rooted in Heritage of **Craftsmanship**

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A dessert symphony of classic and contemporary flavors (p10)





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Towards Innovation rooted in Heritage of Craftsmanship

Employing over 2 million people or 20% of the active population, Malagasy craftsmanship generates 10% of the country's GDP, highlighting its critical role in both production and export. This sector is a testament to its economic importance; it stands as a vital economic engine intertwined with the country's identity. Today, the sector is entering a period of renewal and growth. The global trend of returning to natural materials and authentic products has placed the island among countries with high artisanal potential. Partnerships between various local (public and private sectors) and international stakeholders are committed to supporting artisans—ensuring access to raw materials, offering skill development programs, and opening doors to both national and international markets. These efforts aim not only to preserve traditional methods but also to harness innovation, allowing artisans to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Take, for example, the famed Antemoro paper, an ancient craft revived and celebrated for its beauty and sustainability. Created from wild mulberry trees, its production process reflects both a deep respect for the environment and a commitment to preserving historical techniques. Similarly, the Zafimaniry's woodcraft, recognized by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage, symbolizes the intersection of artistry, culture, and identity, accessible only by a trek



Océane Ramasimanana,
Editor-in-chief

through the island's lush forests, where their heritage is carefully safeguarded.

Yet challenges remain. Access to affordable raw materials like zebu horns and raffia has become a pressing issue. Artisans must navigate fluctuating prices while striving to meet the growing demand for their products. In response, the ministerial department in charge has established and envisions establishing more resource centers to ensure a stable supply chain, and training programs are helping artisans hone their entrepreneurial skills, empowering them to scale their businesses while preserving their craft.

This evolving sector is further bolstered by Madagascar's push toward greater market access. The construction of a dedicated artisanal village in Ivato, exhibitions at tourist hotspots and participation in international fairs all serve as critical platforms for local artisans to connect with buyers from across the globe. These initiatives are not only a bridge between the past and the future but also a pathway to greater economic prosperity.

As we open the pages of this magazine, we invite you to discover the depth, diversity, and dedication of Madagascar's artisans. From traditional silk-making techniques to intricate tapestries woven from the island's unique plant fibers, the craftsmanship of Madagascar is an unbroken thread linking past to present, tradition to innovation. It is a journey through the heart of Malagasy culture, where every piece tells a story, every creation is a work of art, and every artisan is a guardian of our collective heritage.

 By **Océane Ramasimanana**

Madagascar Firms Seize Global Opportunity at Las Vegas African Pavilion



Madagascar made a notable impact at a major Las Vegas trade show last February, with several firms selected for the African Pavilion. Among the participants were AmCham Madagascar members, including Ampela Art, Beemada, Nextler Holding, Best Brand Group, Nivo Jewels, and Raketa. This opportunity, backed by Prosper Africa and USAID, allowed these companies to showcase their products and explore global trade opportunities.

Raketa, Ampela Art, Beemada, and Nivo Jewels gained international recognition for their artisan products, blending tradition with modernity. Notably, all these firms are owned by women, further highlighting their leadership and innovation in the international business landscape. The event also highlighted Madagascar's growing presence in global trade, benefiting from initiatives like AGOA, which provides duty-free access to the U.S. market.

Special Thanks from AmCham Exhibitors

"We, the exhibitors from AmCham Madagascar, would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Prosper Africa, USAID, Echotex, and Amcham Madagascar for your invaluable support. Your dedication has been instrumental in helping our businesses reach new heights on the global stage. Your efforts have provided us with opportunities to expand our markets and showcase the best of Madagascar to the world.

We deeply appreciate your partnership and contribution to our success, and we are looking forward to being part of the next event. Thank you for being a vital part of our journey!"

By **Lalaina Rakotoarison**



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Sylvain Courdil: The keys to reinventing Madagascar's craftsmanship

Craftsmanship involves all makers who create products or provide services by hand, as opposed to industrial production. Essentially, anything not industrial can fall under the category of craftsmanship. At its core, craftsmanship is about primordial knowledge—ancient, essential knowledge that humanity has relied on for ages. It's rooted in natural materials like wood, natural fibers, and the earth. Over time, other elements like metal were added, but the foundation remains in these natural materials.

Madagascar has an ancient civilization that has never broken the circle of primordial knowledge. Malagasy people still hold it in their hands. In the past, everything was created sustainably and built to last. Today, modern society often prioritizes speed, and if something breaks quickly, it's not a big deal because people will just buy again. But in Madagascar, many craftsmen still maintain the mindset of creating strong, long-lasting products.

What is quality?

Quality is a mindset focused on doing things well. It involves meeting basic requirements and putting in your best effort. Achieving quality requires a systematic approach and oversight. Even simple tasks can be done with high quality if the person doing them takes the time to ensure each step is done properly. This means checking everything from the raw materials to the final product. The same principle applies to services as well. In Madagascar, there are some truly brilliant works, especially with bags and jewelry, made from natural materials, even animal products like zebu horns. They also do beautiful work with stones, including precious stones and jewelry. During the International Handicraft Fair in



Sylvain Courdil, during 'Programme ETIK Océan Indien' Copyright: Bana Yousouf 2024

Madagascar – IHM¹, a strong emphasis on quality was observed. There's incredible work happening with recycled materials—metal, old clothes, tires, and plastic. This isn't just a trend for today, but it holds great promise for the future. It's crucial to preserve resources, which are mostly based on nature when we talk about primordial knowledge. *"Quality should be the norm, the foundation."*

Natural fabrics, the basic materials needed for crafting

Madagascar exports some of its raw materials, and there's now a new law prohibiting the export of raw fabrics. This is beneficial for the country because Madagascar has the knowledge to process and transform these materials, even if it's only semi-processed. Take raffia, for instance—the highest quality raffia in Madagascar often isn't available to local makers because it's exported to China. This creates a challenge: how can we make top-quality products if we don't have access to the best raw materials? It's important to help Malagasy artisans transform their materials locally. For that

to happen, traditional knowledge needs to evolve, and we need innovation.

Understanding the heritage that Malagasy people possess

Madagascar has the ability to shape its heritage. The evolution of this heritage, without harming or distorting it, is what we call innovation. It's important not to diminish or damage this knowledge, but rather treat it with care and make it relevant to today.

A question of mindset

Innovation in traditional knowledge is achievable through a blend of low technology and high technology, as well as circular economy practices and eco-design. We can produce faster and more affordably, but it all depends on the mindset and the training we receive. As an example, in a small village near Andasibe, in Vohimana, training in artisanship has taken place. It started with just five women. After five years, there were 93 women attending the training. This shows that it's possible to change the mindset, but we need to demonstrate that it can be done.

Examples of innovation

It is possible to work on key products of Madagascar, making them more practical while respecting their origins.

■ For instance, the *"lambahoany,"* a traditional fabric, is often mass-produced these days, but it was originally handcrafted. A new concept has been developed, called the *"lambaroa."*² It's the new *lambahoany*, incorporating both threads and hand-painted designs. The idea is to return to traditional methods while adding modern elements, like incorporating hand-knit threads into the basic fabric.

1. International Handicraft Fair in Madagascar (IHM): First edition of fair trade in Madagascar focused on artisanship, set by the Minister of Tourism and Handicraft held last June, 2024.

2. "Lambaroa" is derived from the phonetic sound of "lambahoany," which relates to "lamba one" iray in Malagasy, and "roa" means two.

This allows young people to easily engage with the craft and create new designs based on traditional products.

- Another example is the "sarona", cover of a type of bag used mostly in Vohimana. It was difficult to open and close, which made it less practical. So a more functional cover was created, transforming it into a smaller, more convenient bag. We can see versions of this bag in many places now
- Lastly, the traditional school bag made from natural fibers. Children in the forest used to carry these bags to school. A cover was added and slight adjustments were made, and suddenly, it was being seen as a women's bag. It shows how traditional products can be modernized.

Preserving traditional knowledge through intergenerational wealth

In Madagascar, the younger generation, who make up the majority of the population, often gravitate toward city life, distancing themselves from traditional roots. However, we can bridge this gap by merging old knowledge with new approaches. Malagasy artisans can tap into their heritage to create innovative works. The youth, connected and influenced by global trends, should collaborate with traditional artisans. Many are engaged in modern technology, similar to Japan's "otaku," and if harnessed wisely, this can help preserve traditional knowledge.

Importance of training

In the past, there was a large collective of artisans in Madagascar called "Madacraft," which brought together more than 2,000 makers. Training has been conducted for them, focusing on international trends—like color preferences, which change every year. It's also important to consider factors like size standards, which vary by country. French sizes are different from Italian, American, or German sizes. Artisans need to think about their customers' needs and not just repeat traditional designs without considering the global market. A recent

organization in Madagascar called the Federation of the Chambers of Works and Crafts (FCMA.M) connects more than 150 different types of crafts. Their office is located in CENAM, 67HA, trainers involve to the program 'Artisans Sans Frontières' powered by Les Chambres des Métiers et de l'Artisanat (France and Germany), are helping to the empowerment of makers.

"Loharano" center and program for Malagasy artisans

There is a vision to establish a center called "Loharano," which in Malagasy means "the source." We need to show artisans what quality craftsmanship looks like in Madagascar—not everyone will produce at that level, but quality can inspire. Some artisans will excel at creating, others at innovating, and some at mastering technology. In addition, handicrafts in Madagascar and the southwestern Indian Ocean need global recognition for their ethical and organic fashion skills. To achieve this, the *Loharano* program will focus on:

- Establishing a school in Madagascar to train and validate ecological and traditional skills, promote resource preservation, and support economic alternatives, with support from the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation within the local office based in South Africa, supports the spread of The School of Ecology and Traditional Works.
- Creating the ecoLAB center for eco-design research, using tools from the Indian Ocean Commission to develop new organic materials, and transforming waste into valuable resources.
- Developing the Regional indian-océane® ethical brand collaborating with Madagascar, Mauritius, and Réunion to create a globally recognized label that reflects the region's heritage and modern trends.

A call for interest has been launched to develop this triptych program in the coming years.

Fair Trade mentality

Another important aspect is the idea of fair trade. In Madagascar, we have ANCESM, the *Association Nationale du Commerce Equitable et Solidaire de Madagascar*, which is linked to the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO). In the Indian Ocean region, the WFTO is represented by WFTO Africa and the Middle East. It's crucial for Madagascar to embrace this fair trade mentality. Artisans are not just crafting objects; they are working to sustain their families and communities. Fair trade respects both the artisans and nature, preserving resources while adding value to raw materials. The fair-trade approach gives dignity to the artisans, ensuring they know their work is valuable and recognized. Even the simplest crafts, which may appear basic, often require complex and skilled labor. Unfortunately, the design finishes often feel outdated, with styles that reflect trends from 30 years ago. For example, the lizard motifs or coconut trees that don't truly represent the richness of Malagasy culture. We need to focus on expressing our heritage in an authentic and innovative way. Remember, while money is important to survive, feeding your heart with creativity and your mind with positivity is just as crucial. Be aware of what's happening in the market—both locally and internationally—but always mix that knowledge with your own passion and your heritage. That's how you'll create something authentic and lasting.



Edited by **Winifred Fitzgerald** and **Océane Ramasimanana**

Sylvain Courdil is a skilled artist and craftsman with 30 years of experience across 25 countries. Specializing in eco-design, upcycling, sourcing, and production, he returned to his childhood home in Djibouti after a transformative experience in Tokyo. Now based in La Réunion, he focuses on strengthening the Fair-Trade network in the Indian Ocean by connecting eco-responsible artisans and farmers.

Centre National de l'Artisanat Malagasy: A Pillar of the Promotion of Crafts in Madagascar

The *Centre National de l'Artisanat Malagasy* (CENAM), as a Public Establishment of Industrial and Commercial Character, founded in 1978, is responsible for the promotion of crafts in Madagascar. It is dedicated to promoting traditional know-how and innovation in this sector. CENAM works hand in hand with the Minister in charge of Handicraft but most of the time, its commitment is reflected in three main activities:

- 1) The professionalization of artisans,**
- 2) the facilitation of their access to raw materials and 3) the search for outlets for artisanal products.**

Aware that the sustainability of craftsmanship requires the transmission of knowledge, CENAM offers various training programs to be carried out in its workshops and also works in partnership with other well-equipped professionals. It has collaborated with several partners during its years of existence, such as NGOs, associations, decentralized communities, Professional Training Centers, etc. and it trains around 1000 persons per year. CENAM has permanent trainers specializing in craftsmanship, but it also uses consultants depending on the needs expressed. To this day, CENAM provides short-term professional training in artisan professions, so certificates are issued at the end of each session.

CENAM provides:

basic training, capacity building, and cross-cutting training

Artisans at the regional level who have received design training are moving beyond traditional practices and are now embracing innovation and creativity in their products. Women



Fabienne RALAHY,
General Director of CENAM

Associations and groups for persons with disabilities request its training and so, it sends trainers all over Madagascar such as Melaky, Boeny, Atsinanana in 2023.

Madagascar is rich in raw materials, and crafts in Madagascar are characterized by its great diversity in forms, production and services. In the SAVA region, agri-food plays a big role, thanks to the production of Vanilla, the Atsimo-Andrefana region is especially famous for weaving (mohair rugs), in the Amoron'i Mania region sculpture (Zafimaniry), in the Menabe region woodwork (*botry* manufacturing).

CENAM's support for artisans is not limited to professionalization, but it also offers them a platform to sell and exhibit their creations. It is an activity that is divided into several components; it also seeks ways to help artisans sell their products such as:

- 1. Showrooms:** at the regional level, in which one can discover a vast selection of artisanal products made

by artisans from all over the Island. Visitors can discover, buy and/or order decorative objects, jewelry, textiles, and many other treasures.

- 2. Markets and Exhibitions:** CENAM organizes and facilitates the participation of artisans in markets and exhibitions, both nationally and internationally. These events are ideal opportunities for artisans to make themselves known, meet potential buyers and establish professional contacts. It also has a Village of Creative Artisans, "VITASOA", for the sale and exhibition of artisanal products.

Thanks to these various activities to promote crafts, the National Center for Malagasy Crafts contributes significantly to the economic and cultural development of Madagascar. By training new artisans and offering them marketing opportunities, CENAM contributes to the fight against unemployment and the promotion of national cultural heritage. CENAM also contributes to environmental protection, because the majority of artisans work in the plant fiber sectors (such as raffia and sisal) and various animal fibers (zebu horn, leather). It encourages the valorization of other existing raw materials on the island (mangrove). Handmade products are the specificity of Malagasy crafts.

CENAM would always like to improve its activities for the development of Malagasy crafts and to expand the partnership with other specialized national or international organizations so that Malagasy craft products are competitive on the international market.

 By **Fabienne RALAHY**

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**SOCIETE GENERALE
MADAGASIKARA**

Concocted by Radisson BLU's Chef Joelina Radrianjanahary : A dessert symphony of classic and contemporary flavors

In a world where culinary arts continuously evolve, there remains a deep reverence for the age-old traditions that have shaped the delicacies we savor today. The craft of creating by hand is at the heart of this reverence, where craftsmanship and tradition meet innovation. This philosophy is beautifully exemplified in the art of pastry-making, where every macaroon or pastry tells a story of heritage, skill, and creativity.

Tradition

Making macaroons is a revered tradition in French pastry. These intricate treats, with their crisp shell and chewy interior, demand precise technique and patience. Passed down through generations, the craft of macaroon-making symbolizes artisanal skill, where every detail—from sifting almond flour to folding meringue—matters. Joelina Radrianjanahary's Strawberry, Pistachio, and Citrus Pearl Macaroons honor tradition by using classic techniques like stiffening egg whites and blending almond-sugar.

Local, sustainable ingredients

Artisanat is about both preserving techniques and making mindful choices. This recipe highlights the importance of using local, sustainable ingredients like fresh strawberries and pistachios, which enhance flavor and support local agriculture. By incorporating organic citrus and fresh strawberry coulis, it demonstrates how eco-friendly choices are central to the artisan ethos and environmental stewardship.



Innovation through fusion

While tradition is revered, artisanat also embraces innovation. Chef Joelina's recipe blends classic macaroon elements with modern touches like citrus pearls, creating a contemporary culinary experience. This fusion of pistachio, almond, mascarpone, and citrus pearls shows how innovation can revitalize tradition and push the boundaries of craft.

Recipe: Strawberry, Pistachio, and Citrus Pearl Macaroons

Serves 8

Pistachio Macaroons:

- 90 g egg whites
- 20 g pistachio powder
- 200 g powdered sugar
- 125 g almond powder
- Coloring
- 25 g sugar
- 200 g raspberry confit

Instructions: Mix the powdered sugar with the almond and pistachio powders, sift for a fine consistency. Beat the egg whites with the sugar until stiff, then gently fold in the almond-sugar mixture. Add color as desired. Pipe the mixture onto a baking sheet and bake at 130°C. Once cooled, fill with raspberry confit.

Strawberry Mascarpone Crèmeux:

- 50 cl crème fleurette
- 2 vanilla beans
- 150 g mascarpone
- 3 spoonfuls of sugar
- 350 g strawberry coulis

Instructions: Whisk together the cream, mascarpone, and sugar until stiff, then fold in the strawberry coulis. Pipe the mixture using a fluted tip.

Citrus Pearls:

- 200 g orange juice
- 1 teaspoon agar agar
- A glass of chilled olive oil

Instructions: Boil the orange juice with agar agar, and then drop the mixture into the chilled olive oil to form pearls.

Presentation: Arrange three filled macaroons on a plate, accompanied by two shells of strawberry and mascarpone cream, a sprinkle of citrus pearls, a dusting of pistachio powder, and a nasturtium flower for decoration. Serve immediately.

Recipe by **Joelina Radrianjanahary**



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Recycling the Zebu: A New Life for a Malagasy Symbol



In Madagascar, the zebu is not just a livestock animal but a deep cultural symbol. Representing wealth, strength, and spirituality, it is omnipresent in Malagasy daily life and rituals. When a zebu reaches the end of its life, it leaves behind a valuable resource: its horn. Rather than letting this material go to waste, Malagasy artisans, driven by companies like Ts'Art Fibre, transform it into functional works of art. This practice combines tradition with innovation, creating unique objects while promoting a sustainable and environmentally friendly development model.

The importance of zebu horn in Malagasy handicraft sector

The zebu horn, with its robustness and malleability, offers immense creative potential. Historically, this material has been used to make various utilitarian and decorative objects, such as jewelry and utensils. Each horn is unique, both in shape and color, providing a natural palette, ranging from pearly white to deep black, with various shades of brown in between. These characteristics make it a sought-after material by artisans, who see in it the opportunity to create pieces that are both aesthetic and durable.

The transformation process: from raw horn to works of art

The transformation of zebu horn is a meticulous process involving

several teams. Artisans select, clean, heat, and shape the horns to create a variety of objects. Through carving and polishing techniques, they reveal the natural patterns and produce unique, refined pieces. This artisanal skill ensures that the objects are both functional and aesthetic, reflecting a respect for traditions while meeting contemporary needs.

The economic and social impact of zebu horn crafts

Zebu horn crafts play a key role in the Malagasy economy. By creating jobs for artisans, it supports local communities and provides a stable source of income. The workshops where the transformation takes place also serve as centers for passing on skills, where young people can learn and continue artisanal techniques. This process ensures the sustainability of traditions while adding value to Madagascar's cultural heritage.

Ts'Art Fibre: promoting malagasy Craftsmanship

Ts'Art Fibre creates fashion accessories and home decorations through artisanal methods, using plant fibers and recycled materials to allow beneficiaries to showcase their identity and uniqueness. The company is committed to enhance local crafts by highlighting the identity of Malagasy creations. Among the recycled materials, it uses zebu horn. The company does not just produce objects; it perpetuates

and modernizes traditional know-how. Each piece created becomes a testament to Malagasy culture, thus giving the products symbolic value and cultural significance.

Recycling: an ecological approach

By using zebu horn, Ts'Art Fibre adopts an ecological approach by recycling a material that would otherwise be wasted. This initiative contributes to waste reduction while making use of an abundant natural resource. Consumers who choose these products are participating in responsible consumption, favoring durable and environmentally friendly items.

The authenticity of traditional techniques and materials

Malagasy craftsmanship is distinguished by the use of traditional techniques and materials. Zebu horn, a natural and durable material, offers an alternative to industrial production. Its transformation, done by hand, gives the products incomparable quality and authenticity. This approach helps preserve ancestral know-how while meeting the demands of the modern market.

The role of artisans: guardians of cultural heritage

Malagasy artisans are the custodians of a rich cultural heritage. Their work is part of an effort to preserve and transmit

ancestral knowledge. Each piece made from zebu horn reflects their technical mastery and commitment to perpetuating valuable traditions. Ts'Art Fibre plays a crucial role in providing commercial opportunities for artisans, enabling them to make a living from their art and to promote their culture.

Innovation and tradition: a delicate balance

While zebu horn handicrafts are rooted in traditional techniques, it is also open to innovation. Ts'Art Fibre encourages artisans to explore new forms and incorporate contemporary elements into their creations. This approach allows the renewal

of craftsmanship while remaining true to Malagasy cultural roots. By combining traditional distribution channels with online platforms, Ts'Art Fibre reaches a broader audience, concerned with responsible and ethical consumption.

Towards a sustainable future for Malagasy craftsmanship

The recycling of zebu horn perfectly illustrates the ability of Malagasy craftsmanship to reconcile tradition and modernity. Each zebu horn product is a living testament to Malagasy culture, offering consumers the opportunity to own a unique, meaningful item. By supporting this

initiative, consumers contribute to the preservation of Malagasy culture and economy while participating in a sustainable development model.

Thanks to Ts'Art Fibre's commitment, the zebu, an enduring symbol of Madagascar, finds new life in art objects, carefully crafted by talented artisans. Malagasy craftsmanship continues to shine, offering everyone the opportunity to support the local economy while valuing a precious cultural heritage.

 By **Bako Noëline Rakotondraibe** and **Anita Ramamonjisoa**



AKOMBA GARMENT



"The quality you deserve"



AmCham's First and Second Quarters Quick Activity Report

AmCham commenced the year with its pioneer activities, the English Discussion Group (EDG), the traditional breakfast roundtables. Partnerships were also a large share of the two quarters. Let us reflect on some events that occurred between January and June 2024.

The English Discussion Group

EDG resumed with the registration of 30 participants from esteemed member Henri Fraise & Cie. AmCham led a series of three terms (30 sessions) from February to April 2024.



AmCham facilitator and some representatives of HFF

TMRTs with the US Embassy team

On February 22nd, this year's TMRTs began with Mr. Richard Hayes as AmCham's guest speaker. The Regional Security Officer at the Embassy of the United States of America and the Republic of Madagascar & The Union of the Comoros highlighted the importance of collaboration between the US and Madagascar. He especially shared about:

- Security partnerships and cooperation;
- Protecting US and Madagascar interests by strengthening emergency protocols, and maintaining close coordination with local security forces;
- Capacity building and training.

On March 21st, Mrs. Stephanie Arnold, the Deputy Chief of Mission for the US Mission to the Republic of Madagascar and the Union of Comoros gave an overview of her expertise and experiences and spoke about:

- Economic opportunities;
- AGOA legislation;
- American Independence celebration.



Richard Hayes and AmCham representatives: President Russell Kelly, Secretary Larissa Ratsiraka and Board member Andriamisa Ravelomanana.



Stephanie Arnold during her presentation.

TMRT with the African Development Bank

On April 18th, Adam Amoumoun, the Country Manager of AfDB focused on:

- Economic development and infrastructure;
- Financial inclusion;
- Private sector engagement.



US Embassy representative Julianna Kim, AfDB Country Manager Adam Amoumoun, AmCham Secretary Larissa Ratsiraka and AmCham Executive Secretary Lalaina Rakotoarison

Third participation in the *Foire Internationale de Madagascar – FIM*

Since the 17th edition, AmCham has established a strategic partnership with Hazovato Forello Expo for the FIM.

Demonstrating a firm commitment to the principles of eco-responsibility, as the theme of FIM for this year, AmCham allocated its exhibition spaces, namely the 35 square meters sub-mezzanine and 54 square meters Avenue Premium, to members and partners on "first-come, first-served" basis as customary.

Esteemed participants included NCBA-CLUSA, Raketa Sarl, Z-YOGA, OKAPI Labs, Maraina Madagascar, Renala Madagascar, El Bissap Mada, and Ts'Art Fibre.

During the FIM, AmCham was honored to be invited as a guest speaker at one of the conferences. A comprehensive presentation titled "Doing Business in USA" was delivered. This engagement underscored AmCham's commitment to facilitate international commerce and to support the growth of Madagascar's business community.



AmCham's Avenue Premium



AmCham's eco-responsible sub-mezzanine



AmCham with colleagues from CanCham Madagascar, Mineralphil Madagascar and Fireflies during FIM Conference "Doing Business in USA."

Made For A Woman: A Strategy for Growth, Impact and Sustainability

In the global fashion industry, Made For A Woman stands out as a beacon of responsible luxury craftsmanship, consistently setting new standards with its unwavering commitment to sustainability, authenticity and inclusive storytelling.

Founded in 2019 by Italian-Indian entrepreneur and designer Eileen Akbaraly in her home country of Madagascar, a country rich in culture, unique biodiversity, and artisanal heritage, this company leverages the intricate art of weaving raffia – a locally and sustainably sourced material integral to Malagasy culture – to empower marginalized communities through innovative business practices and celebrates traditional craftsmanship and savoir faire.

The brand does so through production of an in-house product line, mostly focused on accessories; exclusive collaborations with globally-recognized *maisons*; and third-party production for top luxury fashion brands.

Preserving cultural heritage through sustainable craftsmanship

Made For A Woman's innovative business model is a testament to the essence of social entrepreneurship; rooted in community impact, women's empowerment, cultural preservation and environmental stewardship, the brand's holistic approach not only uplifts individuals, but strengthens and empowers entire communities, producing scalable, concrete and impactful results that echo powerfully across the entire industry.

Indeed, at the core of Made For A Woman's success is its ability to combine the authenticity of Malagasy craftsmanship and raw materials while embracing modern styles and silhouettes, setting an example of



Eileen Akbaraly,
Founder of Made For A Woman

balanced coexistence between tradition and innovation and preserving cultural heritage through innovative designs.

At the same time, sustainability is a cornerstone of M4W's ethos: the brand holds a World Fair Trade Organization verification since 2022, and is currently in the process of completing its B-Corp application for its sustainable best practices, in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals for 2030.

The brand's environmental stewardship is reflected in its choice of materials and production processes: working exclusively with local producers of sustainable raffia holding Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) and Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI) certifications, Made For A Woman's products and packaging are made using responsibly sourced materials and dyed with AZO-free pigments, minimizing environmental impact and promoting eco-friendly practices.

Made For A Woman also launched a recycling raffia project, creating a line

of rainbow-colored products that reuse raffia that would otherwise go to waste: each product is different and entirely unique, like a wearable piece of art. This innovative recycling scheme has allowed the brand to sharply cut down the percentage of wasted raffia from approximately one third, which is the average industry standard, to less than two percent.

These sustainable choices are not only good for the planet but also enhance the quality and durability of the brand's products and position Made For A Woman at the forefront of a global shift in responsible production for the luxury industry, proving that systemic solutions to fulfill sustainable and ethical requirements are key elements to weave a more responsible future for the entire sector.

Driving innovation through social responsibility

Made For A Woman's approach to sustainability extends beyond environmental concerns. The brand is deeply committed to social responsibility, ensuring that its business practices benefit both people and the planet.

In Madagascar, over a quarter of the population is employed in the artisanal sector, which is the second largest employer, after agriculture, with artisanal textiles alone contributing to almost 20% of the country's GDP as well as almost one tenth of all foreign investments. However, 80% of people across the country live in extreme poverty conditions: by providing stable employment, good labor conditions, and a supportive work environment, Made For A Woman is able to address this issue, consistently contributing to the economic stability of the communities it operates in and making a lasting impact on the most vulnerable segments of the population.

Over the course of four years, the brand has scaled from 15 to over 350 artisans, recruiting predominantly women from vulnerable backgrounds, including survivors of domestic violence, single mothers, and people with disabilities, who are provided with fair wages, safe working conditions, and access to essential services for themselves and their loved ones. Through Made For A Woman, artisans and their families have access to free healthcare, including mental healthcare services, group and individual therapy, preventative care, education, professional development schemes, social and juridical services, and even childcare programs, benefiting over 1000 people overall.

Impact in the Global Fashion Market

This innovative model has not gone unnoticed in the luxury fashion industry. The brand has collaborated with renowned fashion houses like Chloé and Fendi, among others, creating exclusive handcrafted items that showcase the beauty and versatility of raffia.

The brand's story has been covered extensively on local and international media, as editors look for talent to answer the question of "how do we shift the current system from being exploitative to ethical", with features in Vogue Italy, The New York Times, WWD, Forbes, Elle, and Marie Claire, among others.

Founder and CEO Eileen Akbaraly has also been awarded several prestigious prizes for her commitment to sustainability, including the Fast Company World Changing Ideas Award in 2024, the Better World Forum's Best Commitment Award for the documentary "The Raffia Journey", dedicated to the raffia supply chain in Madagascar, in 2021; and she has been recognized twice as a finalist at the Italian National Fashion Chamber's Emerging Designers and Human Rights Awards in 2022 and 2023.

Made For A Woman's story is a powerful reminder of the potential for businesses to drive positive change: its successful business model benefits artisans,

consumers, and the environment, serving as a blueprint for other brands looking to make a meaningful impact.

As the fashion industry continues to evolve, brands like Made For A Woman will undoubtedly play a crucial role in shaping a more sustainable and

equitable future for all, proving that it is possible to achieve both business success and positive social impact while creating products with value, quality and purpose.

 By Gaia Barlassina



Sylvie Rasolofonjanahary: Improving the production of eco-friendly charcoal for a successful green energy transition

In Madagascar, given the economic and environmental conditions, charcoal is the main source of energy for households, both urban and rural, especially for the most disadvantaged. Charcoal plays a crucial economic and social role and is therefore politically sensitive.

A challenge to address a major issue

For poor farmers, charcoal production is the only means to obtain financial liquidity. On the other end, many urban households, around 95%, use charcoal as their primary energy source for cooking and heating.

National charcoal production for energy purposes utilizes about 3.8 million hectares of natural forests and 265,000 hectares of managed plantations. Although forest resources seem substantial, population growth and increasing energy demands, which lead to cutting trees for charcoal, have raised concerns about the sustainability of forest exploitation. The harmful effects of charcoal exploitation are numerous. Deforestation, linked to charcoal production, is one of the main contributors to climate change in Madagascar due to the release of greenhouse gases.

Producing green charcoal through an ecological value chain

Improving and promoting eco-friendly charcoal production and usage represents a sustainable and economical energy alternative. Developed by the *Fédération des Chambres de Métiers et de l'Artisanat à Madagascar* (FCMA.M) under the Ministry of Tourism and Artisanat, the project aims to enhance the value chain of eco-friendly charcoal production at a national level, impacting both formal and informal sectors, from small producers



Sylvie Rasolofonjanahary,
President of Federation of Chambers of Trades and Crafts in Madagascar — FCMA.M

to large-scale distribution. Funded by the *Fonds Malgache de Formation Professionnelle* (FMFP) and *l'Agence Française de Développement* through *Projets d'intérêt National Prioritaires* (INP) window, the project seeks to make a significant ecological and economic impact by creating value at every level—employment creation and stimulation of local economies.

An integrated approach by leveraging local resources and recycling

The project will directly benefit 890 individuals across five targeted regions, selected based on the availability and abundance of raw materials to ensure the sustainability of activities. These materials include acacia, textile waste, rice straw, and coconut husk. Beneficiaries will receive training in all areas of the value chain, such as raw material selection and collection, environmental impact and resource regeneration, eco-friendly charcoal production techniques (carbonization, safety during production, optimizing charcoal quality and yield), machine design and manufacturing, training of trainers (machine design,

assembly, maintenance, and upgrades), supply chain logistics, and marketing and distribution.

Partnerships facing a common challenge

Several partnerships have been formed around this innovative and future-forward project: FCMA.M, the Ministry of Tourism and Artisanat (MTA), five Regional Chambers of Crafts and Artisanat, 25 charcoal production operator groups in the regions of Analamanga, Vakinankaratra, Itasy, Atsinanana, and Boeny, *Artisans Sans Frontières* (ASF), S2M, ADE, along with FMFP and AFD for funding. This partnership framework is part of the transformation of the charcoal sector in Madagascar by producing high-quality eco-friendly charcoal that generates economic, social, and environmental value for the country. The development actions in this priority sector, which creates jobs, support Madagascar's growth.

The partnership between the formal and informal sectors is at the core of this project, from providing raw materials to distributing eco-friendly charcoal. VIVO ENERGY and 203 informal enterprises will collaborate.

Ultimately, the project aims to reduce unemployment in the sector by 7.5%, produce 4,669 tons of eco-friendly charcoal annually, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 10%, increase clean charcoal production by 10% by 2026, improve the quality of eco-friendly charcoal production regionally and nationally, master the production process of clean charcoal machines, and transfer and disseminate best practices and skills nationwide.

 By **Sylvie Rasolofonjanahary,**

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Gaëlle Randriamanana-Pless:

Overall enhancement of artisanship is achieved through continuous research and studies, all done with love, conviction, and an eco-responsible mindset

At *Société de Tri; Compactage et Valorisation* (STCV), we actively collaborate with local artisans in Madagascar to integrate sustainability into their craft, particularly in upcycling and waste management. Our team includes four artisans specializing in sewing and weaving, with two weavers having received extensive training from a master weaver using a traditional loom. Our role goes beyond collaboration — we provide training, resources, and a platform for these artisans to showcase their eco-friendly products. Together, we transform waste materials like plastics, food packaging and textiles into high-quality, innovative products called "eco-goodies", eco-friendly products. This effort not only reduces the environmental impact of waste but also promotes responsible consumption practices. By implementing sustainable production processes, we contribute to a circular economy, offering products that blend functionality, aesthetics, and environmental respect.

Traditional techniques infused with our own innovative approach

We utilize loom machines to weave eco-friendly products from waste materials such as food packaging (candy wrappers, biscuit packs, powdered milk containers, Tetrapacks, etc.). Additionally, we upcycle



Gaëlle Randriamanana-Pless,
Founder Manager of STCV

advertising tarpaulins and fabric scraps by blending them with food packaging waste to create unique and fashionable items like bags, document holders, cardholders, etc. suitable for both daily use and the office environment.

These innovations enable artisans to create higher-value products from waste, thus improving both the economic and aesthetic aspects of their work. A dedicated department has been established specifically for the in-house production of eco-friendly items, where our workshop manager ensures daily compliance with design standards, quality of finishes, and the uniqueness of each product. We not only educate a more resilient and eco-conscious

consumer community but also support our artisans daily in embracing this eco-responsible mindset, along with a culture of continuous improvement and quality.

Four key steps for waste control

Upcycling significantly reduces the amount of waste that ends up in landfills or pollutes the environment. By repurposing materials that would otherwise be discarded, we contribute to reducing resource consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. At STCV, we implement a comprehensive recycling chain consisting of four key steps:

- 1) collection, 2) processing,
- 3) transformation and 4) reintegration.

The finished products are reintroduced into the market, contributing to a circular economy.

Our operations are grounded in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) principles, meaning we integrate environmentally friendly and socially responsible practices throughout our value chain. By transforming food packaging into "eco-goodies," we not only reduce waste but also contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. This approach minimizes our environmental impact and aligns with our sustainability goals, promoting responsible consumption and production practices.



Creation of demand for recycled products

Through our innovative approach to recycling, we transform waste materials into finished products, such as the woven items created by our artisans. This method not only results in unique and distinctive products but also generates steady income for the artisans, who receive a monthly salary. Additionally, to stay at the forefront of innovation and ensure their creations stand out in the market, STCV continuously invests in research and development through its Atelier department, enabling artisans to consistently innovate, refine their craftsmanship, and create original, high-quality designs.

Success through partnerships

We have successfully partnered with around thirty local businesses, offering turnkey CSR solutions that guide them toward eco-friendly practices. These companies often become clients for our eco-goodies, purchasing them for year-end gifts, welcome packages, and more. Our participation in targeted events and expos focused on sustainability has also helped us grow our market. The interest in our eco-goodies continues to rise within the local community, and through these efforts, we are steadily raising awareness about sustainability. In the meantime, our manager has traveled extensively and has drawn inspiration from both local and international practices. By blending these influences, we have developed STCV's unique working techniques,



which are reflected in the creation of our current eco-goodies. This approach has become a model of success and innovation within our organization.

The challenge: A consistent supply of recyclable materials

In Antananarivo, where approximately 1,500 tons of waste is generated daily, managing the large volume of recycled food packaging is particularly difficult. Additionally, raising awareness and changing mindsets about the value of up-cycled products is a challenge, as they are sometimes perceived as less desirable than new items. This issue is further compounded by the fact that environmental education is not yet deeply ingrained in the local culture, making it harder to promote waste valorization and encourage the adoption of sustainable management practices. We have addressed these challenges by collaborating with waste collectors and local businesses to ensure a steady supply of recyclable materials. Additionally, we conduct educational campaigns and workshops to raise consumer awareness about the benefits of recycling and sustainability, helping to shift perceptions. To further tackle these issues, we have intensified our outreach efforts by leveraging our social media platforms to promote environmental education to various audiences.

Future trends and developments

Recently, the National Strategy on Corporate Social Responsibility was



established to encourage sustainable development within private and public sectors, which aligns with our goal of positioning eco-friendly products towards companies to promote eco-responsibility. Currently, we market primarily to corporate clients and partners who share our mindset, forming the basis of our local integration strategy, while also aiming to increase international exports.

We currently market our eco-friendly products primarily through our partners, we anticipate increased demand for sustainable products and greater collaboration with companies, governments, and NGOs in Madagascar to support the recycling sector.

We view recycling as more than just a trend—it's a critical part of the solution to global waste and environmental challenges. Our motivation stems from a deep commitment to environmental protection and the belief that waste can be a resource rather than a problem. By engaging in upcycling, we not only reduce the environmental burden of waste but also create economic opportunities for local communities, fostering a circular economy where materials are reused and given a second life. We are driven by the vision that being a poor country does not mean being a dirty one. At STCV, we empower artisans and foster a more sustainable future.



By **Gaëlle Randriamanana-Pless**

Handcrafted Soap by Anoka Botanic: A celebration of Madagascar's botanical heritage

What is the story behind Anoka Botanic?

Anoka Botanic is a natural cosmetics brand that embodies the rich botanical heritage of Madagascar, drawing on centuries-old traditions of skin care and medicinal practices. At the heart of the brand lies a deep respect for nature and its bountiful gifts, particularly those found in the unique flora of Madagascar. Products are crafted with care and precision, reflecting a perfect harmony between traditional Malagasy medicine and a profound love for nature's benefits.

How do the Ankarena Forest's resources impact your products?

Anoka Botanic is committed to producing natural and pure cosmetics that highlight the Malagasy pharmacopoeia, known globally for its effectiveness and healing properties. Handmade crafted soaps are a testament to this commitment, crafted with the finest raw materials, sourced directly from the Ankarena Forest, a family-owned heritage site located on the tropical island of Sainte Marie on Madagascar's East coast. This forest is a treasure trove of botanical wealth, offering ingredients that are not only natural but also sustainably sourced, ensuring that production supports the preservation of this precious ecosystem.

What role do traditional producers play in your process?

Each bar of soap from Anoka Botanic is beyond a cleansing agent; it is a holistic experience that brings the ancient traditions of Madagascar into your daily routine. The slow-process approach to



Rindra Rakotoarisoa,
Deputy CEO of Anoka Botanic

soap-making ensures that the beneficial properties of each plant are preserved, providing a product that is as close to nature as possible. We work closely with traditional producers, supporting sustainable trade and ensuring that our soaps are crafted with the utmost care and respect for both the environment and the local communities.

How does Anoka Botanic integrate Madagascar's traditional plant knowledge?

Madagascar's rich tradition of using plants for beauty treatments and traditional medicine is at the core of Anoka Botanic's philosophy. The knowledge of these natural virtues has been passed down through generations, and we are proud to incorporate this wisdom into every bar of soap we produce. The products are not only a reflection of this deep-rooted tradition but also an innovation in the field of natural cosmetics. The handmade soaps, with their sweet perfumes, are designed to provide a sensory experience that is both luxurious and beneficial to the skin.



How do your products utilize Madagascar's botanical resources?

Anoka Botanic offers more than just soap; we provide a comprehensive range of natural products including essential oils, massage oils, bath salts, balms, and candles. Each product is carefully formulated to harness the power of Madagascar's unique botanical resources, offering you a holistic approach to beauty and wellness. Our commitment to quality and innovation ensures that each product not only meets but exceeds your expectations, providing you with the transformative effects that only nature can offer. Experience the essence of Madagascar with Anoka Botanic's handmade soaps and discover the natural beauty that lies within each bar. Let the rich botanical heritage of Madagascar transform your skincare routine, bringing the wisdom of generations and the purity of nature into your daily life.

 Interview by
Océane Ramasimanana

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NIVO JEWELS — where tradition meets excellence, one handcrafted piece at a time

Founded in 1995 by the visionary designer Nivo-Harinoro Rakotohavana, Nivo Jewels has established itself as a beacon of excellence in the world of handcrafted jewelry and precious stones from Madagascar. Under the brand name Ladah Craft Jewelry, we create masterpieces that resonate with both tradition and innovation, offering a wide range of exquisitely designed pieces.

A legacy of craftsmanship

At Nivo Jewels, each piece is a labor of love, meticulously crafted to ensure the highest quality. Our collection includes a stunning variety of necklaces, pendants, bracelets, rings, signet rings, earrings, cuff links, tie clips, and key rings, all available in silver or gold. What truly sets us apart is our use of precious stones, exclusively sourced from Madagascar. Our selection features a rich array of gemstones, including Amethyst, smoked quartz, citrine, garnet, aquamarine, tourmaline, ruby, sapphire, emerald, rose quartz, amazonite, labradorite, jasper, cordierite, and crystal. Each stone is carefully chosen to complement our designs, resulting in jewelry that is as unique as the individuals who wear it.

Commitment to social responsibility

It is more than just a brand; it's a community. We are proud to employ nine skilled and versatile artisans, each bringing their expertise to the table. Our commitment to social responsibility is reflected in our dedication to providing fair employment opportunities and supporting the local community in Madagascar.



Global recognition

Our journey from a local brand to an international sensation is marked by numerous prestigious exhibitions and collaborations. Nivo Jewels made its international debut in February 2007 at the "Bijoux et Pierres" exhibition in Milan, Italy, representing Madagascar. Since then, we've showcased our collections in Nice, France; Washington, D.C.; New York; and Canada, among other locations. Notably, in 2014, our originality caught the attention of a designer from Tiffany & Co. at an exhibition in New York.

In 2023, we proudly represented our craftsmanship at ASFW in Addis Ababa, further solidifying our presence on the global stage. Our consistent participation in international markets underscores our commitment to sharing the beauty of Madagascan jewelry with the world.

Why Choose Nivo Jewels?

Choosing Nivo Jewels means investing in unique designs and superior quality. We pride ourselves on our short delivery times and trustworthy transactions.

In a few words, our brand is synonymous with "Well done, fast, express."

 Collected and translated by
Océane Ramasimanana

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Nirilanto Felaniaina Rakotoarimanana: Despite modernity, silk continues to be linked to the lives of the Malagasy people

The *lamba*, especially the *lamba landy* (silk cloth), holds a significant place in Malagasy culture. It bestows honor and prestige, particularly because of its beauty and durability. According to history, taken from the book "*Riban'ny lamba soatoavina sy harem-pirenena*" (2005, USAICMAA, MCT *preservation du textile, volet éducatif*), when King Radama I passed away in 1828, the walls inside the Tranovola Palace, his residence in the Rova of Antananarivo, were draped in *lamba lasidy*.

When the first official treaty between the Malagasy and American governments was signed in 1867, Queen Rasoherina presented President Andrew Johnson with a *lamba landy*, which is preserved in the American Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. Thus, *lamba landy* holds a role in Malagasy customs and values, tied to various life events: the New Year (*Asaramanitra*), the traditional *Fandroana* bath, the *Sambatra* ceremony – circumcision, flag-raising ceremonies, weddings, and rituals associated with death, burial, and reburial.

Two types of Malagasy silk

Landikely (*Bombix*), introduced by the English along with mulberry cultivation in 1820, following an agreement with King Radama I to send scholars to train the Malagasy. History notes that King Radama I himself took charge of the distribution of farmed silk. Currently, mulberry cultivation has received significant support. Despite the abundance of other types of fabrics, silk remains essential in the daily lives of the Malagasy, especially in the highlands. The skills and cultural traditions are still deeply embedded in community life. Various actions have



Nirilanto Felaniaina Rakotoarimanana,
Fleur de Soie General Manager

been taken to develop sericulture, led by different actors, both public and NGOs. Silkworm strains had to be imported from South Asian countries, notably Thailand, and sericulture has developed in Ambalavao, Mahitsy, and Ambohitrabiby.

Landibe (*Borocera madagascariensis*), is a variety of silk endemic to Madagascar, used historically for making fabrics. This variety lives in the wild in the tapia forests (a tree endemic to Madagascar), and the cocoons are harvested directly from the trees without the need for prior cultivation. The *Landibe* feeds on plant leaves (*embrevades*, *Cajanus cajan*, *tapia*, etc.), lives naturally in the forest in its habitat but requires care and protection as it faces threats from birds that may eat it or diseases caused by environmental pollution, odors, and decay. Special efforts are currently being made to protect the tapia forests, such as in Arivonimamo and Ambatofinandrahana, which supply the weavers in Manandriana, where the traditional craftsmanship is still preserved.

The tradition of silk dates back to the monarchy, after Andrianampoinimerina, long before colonization. Only wild

silk from Madagascar's endemic tapia forests was used. The regions known for production at that time were Isalo center, north of Ambositra, and Arivonimamo in Itasy. Nowadays, with the gradual destruction of tapia forests, wild silk production has declined. However, the entire process of working with wild silk, from cocoon harvesting to the creation of various items, has been preserved. Wild silk is mainly used for making luxury clothing, scarves, shrouds, and fashion accessories.

Research on Madagascar's natural resources

It has been discovered that over 200 species of plants can be used to produce dyes, such as *kily* for black from its bark, *mantaly* for red dye, *amiasio* for various colors, *ambiaty* for black and blue, *amboara* for orange, *tamotamo* for yellow, and *valatse* (or *nato* or *vongo*) for red. Nature is the primary source for creating and obtaining silk fabrics, but thoughtless exploitation, such as forest burning and overharvesting, has led to the depletion or extinction of many plant species.

In the book "*Le naturalisme malgache*" TOME VIII, published in 1936 by the Zoological and Botanical Park of Tananarive – Tsimbazaza, the evolution of weaving in Madagascar is described as quite simple but highly varied in its important artisanal activity. We can easily imagine the profound yet invisible influence that traditional family weaving, once widespread across the island, had on Malagasy life and mentality, similar to other continuous artisanal occupations.

In the book "*TENONA*" by Ferdinand Marin, published by CENAM and CIDST, silk can be found in Mahitsy, Ampefy, Sakay, Ambohimandroso,

and Antsirabe, as well as in Fandriana, Ambositra, Ambohimahaso, Isalo, and Tolanaro. The traditional looms used include the *landy* ground loom or vertical loom leaning against a wall, as well as imported looms.

Handmade products

Many fabrics are made using traditional tools, but their length and width are limited to 0.75 cm x 4 meters. In 1958, the STHELE loom was introduced at "*Maison STHELE*." In 1980, CENAM introduced a more advanced loom, the STST, of Scandinavian design, capable of producing multiple types of fabric and equipped with pedals.

In summary, traditional looms are still predominantly used by weavers in Madagascar, and all silk is handcrafted, ensuring that it is carefully monitored and maintained as a handmade product. Malagasy silk fabrics stand out from other types of silk produced worldwide, both in the production process, which is 100% handmade, and in the final result.

This method of production remains the greatest asset of Malagasy silk, attracting tourists, but it also constitutes one of the greatest weaknesses of Malagasy sericulture. The artisanal production of silk fabrics is very time-consuming, and production can only be done in limited quantities. The development of the sericulture sector also faces various ecological challenges, such as the gradual destruction of *tapia* forests by bushfires.

Significance

In the 19th century, colonizers introduced a new variety of Chinese silk, the *Bombyx Mori*, known as *landikely*. Unlike *landibe*, this cultivated silk species requires the prior planting of mulberry trees to ensure its nourishment. In the 38th-39th issue of the 11th year of "*VINTSY*", a magazine by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Ralodomalala R. Aimé discusses the significance of *lamba landy*.

Sarimbo: With green and brown stripes, the brown is prominent, with some black and white, symbolizing

prestige when someone is elevated or sanctified.

Kotomena: With red and white colors (the color distribution is not the same across the cloth), it was meant for strong men, such as victorious warriors or military leaders.

Arindrano: With black, white, green, and brown stripes, it was worn by newlywed wives. For the deceased, the *lamba landy* is used for shrouding during burial.

Raw material supply and international competition challenges

The supply of raw materials (preservation of *tapia* forests, development of sericulture, regeneration of silkworm strains)

In terms of international completion, domestic production cannot meet the demands, and the quality of products from Asian countries significantly impacts the international market.

Strategies to sustain the industry's reputation

Despite these challenges, the export of silk items from Madagascar is highly appreciated. Currently, companies in free zones have started producing high-end products such as shawls, though on a small scale, for major fashion houses. Many artisanal companies have accessed niche markets in Europe and North America. The development of fair-trade has also sparked a marked interest in Malagasy silk. On the domestic market, ecotourism or solidarity tourism is an important source for localities producing silk items. The Malagasy tradition of silk clothing is making a comeback in ceremonies. Thus, despite modernity, silk is still linked to the lives of the Malagasy people.

A sector that continues to expand

Several players have decided to enter the silk industry since the early 2000s. In the Itasy region, for example, about 80% of the players started activities related to silk work from 2000, particularly

between 2003 and 2004. Over 80% of these players live in rural areas. Thus, silk production remains primarily a rural activity (sericulture and weaving) or peri-urban (weaving).

Silk has gradually entered the fashion industry, undergoing certain innovations. Many designers are beginning to use this material for their creations and the production of luxury items, mainly for women. The use of silk in fashion is not limited to clothing; it can also be used in accessories. The skilled hands of Malagasy artisans can transform it into shoes, handbags, ties, wallets, and sometimes even home decor items (tablecloths, curtains), revitalizing the sector and attracting tourists.

Tourists are particularly drawn to *landibe*, a species endemic to Madagascar, while affluent Malagasy who know the value of silk are the main consumers. However, many companies cannot export due to a lack of resources..

At Fleur de Soie, we strive to develop our creativity by offering a wide range of silk items while committing to sustainable development by raising awareness among our partners about the ecological impacts on the silk industry. We also work in collaboration with artisans across the island, promoting fair-trade and the inclusion of women in this industry.

 By **Nirilanto Felaniaina Rakotoarimanana**

Nirilanto Felaniaina Rakotoarimanana is a seasoned expert in traditional and modern weaving techniques with 25 years of experience in the silk industry. She has been trained in traditional loom weaving and advanced loom operations at CENAM 67 ha. Additionally, she has specialized in silkworm breeding and mulberry cultivation through training with MITONDRASOA Fanambinana. Her contributions to the industry include the creation of a dedicated weaving workshop: Fleur de Soie (Centre Nationale de l'Artisanat Malagasy (CENAM), Antananarivo).

The GasySkin Association: Driver of Socio-Economic Development in Leathercraft

The GasySkin Association represents a significant commitment to promoting and developing the leather sector in Madagascar. Founded under the FACMAIR project of COMESA, in collaboration with the Ministry in charge of Handicraft, this association was born out of a shared desire to make craftsmanship, particularly leather, a true driver of socio-economic development. Strengthened by the solidarity of its members, the association has set ambitious goals to transform the sector into a competitive industry on both regional and international levels.

Leather as a priority sector

GasySkin is dedicated to the development of the artisanal sector in Madagascar, with a particular focus on leathercraft. The primary objective is to make leather a priority sector in the socio-economic development of the country. Although traditional, the leather sector represents a major economic opportunity, both for its ability to generate foreign currency and for its potential in job creation and the valorization of local resources.

Historical context and challenges

In the early 2000s, associations were established to manage the quota for wild crocodile skins under the supervision of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which listed crocodiles in Appendix II. Over a hundred artisans, organized into these associations, already possessed



Célestin Freddy Randrianasolo
National President of the GasySkin Platform, Manager of the GASYSKIN Cooperative Society

extensive experience in leather craft. However, strict regulations on crocodile skin use, including CITES' encouragement to establish crocodile ranching sites, faced significant challenges. Despite the efforts of a single artisan who managed to create a crocodile ranching site with a license from the Ministry of Water and Forests, this initiative was eventually abandoned due to various difficulties.

100 Members with assorted specialties

GasySkin comprises 100 members, each with specific expertise in the leather value chain, ranging from tanning to leather goods and shoemaking. These artisans, spread across different regions of Madagascar, form a unique platform recognized by COMESA, which strengthens their position to benefit from regional and international projects.

Development strategy

To achieve its goals, the association has implemented a strategic plan based on three major axes. The first axis concerns the regeneration of raw materials, essential to ensuring the viability and sustainability of artisanal activities. This includes the planting of thousands of hectares of Mimosa, a key resource for vegetable tanning, with seeds distributed free of charge to those with suitable land.

The second axis aims to increase production in terms of volume and quality to effectively penetrate regional and international markets. This axis emphasizes the competitiveness of Malagasy products, which are renowned worldwide for their quality and originality, particularly due to vegetable tanning.

The third axis focuses on the professionalization and formalization of artisans and farmers involved in the sector. This involves technical training and the establishment of support structures to facilitate the integration of artisans into more formalized production circuits oriented toward export.

Leather sector in Madagascar

The leather sector in Madagascar is a complex and well-structured value chain. It begins with animal husbandry, followed by the marketing and transport of live animals, and then slaughtering, hide collection, processing of raw hides, tanning, and finally, the manufacturing and marketing of finished products. This

process allows for the production of a wide range of leather goods, from bags and shoes to more specialized accessories. The leather sector in Madagascar offers numerous advantages. In addition to being competitive on the international market, it offers a diversity of products, including crocodile skins and other animals specific to the region. Artisanal production stands out for its authenticity and ability to meet specific demands by creating unique pieces, which satisfy a clientele seeking originality.

National Leather Fair

Fostering the development of the leather sector, GasySkin benefits from the support of the FACMAIR project, an initiative by COMESA to strengthen the leather value chain in Madagascar. This project, launched in 2018-2019, aims to improve production in terms of quality and quantity while integrating the Malagasy sector into the inter-regional and international market.

Through technical training and the provision of appropriate equipment, Malagasy artisans are better prepared to participate in the global leather supply chain.

Additionally, GasySkin participates in the RECAMP program, funded by the 11th edition of European Development Fund (EDF), which aims to strengthen the competitiveness of businesses and improve their access to markets. Regional training workshops organized under this program have enabled the development of traceability systems for leather and hides, the application of quality standards, and the promotion of environmentally friendly practices.

Long-term vision

To continue its development, GasySkin seeks to establish collaborations with financial and technical partners, both nationally and internationally. These partnerships are essential to support the development of the leather sector in Madagascar and, by extension,

contributing to the country's socio-economic development. By working with diverse partners, the association hopes not only to improve local production conditions but also to strengthen Madagascar's position on the global leather scene.

By relying on a well-defined strategy and collaborating with various partners, The GasySkin association aims to transform the artisanal sector into a pillar of national socio-economic development. The potential of Malagasy leather, combined with the commitment of artisans and the quality of their products, offers promising prospects for the future of this essential industry.



Collected and translated by
Océane Ramasimanana



The Metamorphose Project, a project supported by the U.S. Embassy Madagascar

Who are the Metamorphose craftspeople?

The 'Metamorphose' team consists of seven talented self-taught fashion designers from Madagascar—four women and three men: Tachou, Sariaka Rah, Eva Lambà, Phanala, Gaona, Vida, and Lucka. They have between seven and 40 years of experience in fashion. Their hard work was recognized internationally when they joined the 2020 International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), focusing on fashion entrepreneurship. This program gave them a chance to share their innovative ideas and grow their influence.



Impact on modern fashion trends

The Metamorphose Project is making waves in modern fashion by incorporating Malagasy craftsmanship. The team is dedicated to sustainability, which is evident in their use of upcycled materials, eco-friendly practices, and minimal chemicals. Their focus on these sustainable methods highlights the rich heritage of Malagasy craftsmanship while addressing the fashion industry's need for eco-friendly solutions.




Exhibition

The team held a two-day exhibition and workshop where they taught other designers about eco-friendly fashion. They showed how to use sustainable materials and reduce chemical use, inspiring both new and seasoned designers. Over these two days,

125 people attended, and the event ended with a VIP fashion show that demonstrated various ways to lessen the fashion industry's environmental impact. The project also included training for 29 women looking to advance their fashion careers. The sessions taught basic design skills and emphasized sustainable practices. These trainees are now committed to using and spreading these eco-friendly methods in their own work.

Impact on Malagasy society

The Metamorphose Project shows how traditional Malagasy fashion techniques can blend with modern trends to promote sustainability. It is inspiring change in the fashion industry by encouraging responsible practices and training the next generation of designers.

 By **Brice Rakotondrafara**,
Alumni Coordinator,
U.S. Embassy Madagascar



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BoGasy Madagascar: A Brand of Passion and Purpose

Turning artistic heritage into a thriving business is no easy feat. Entrepreneurs like Kelhie Razafiasimalala Vero Hanta, the founder of BoGasy Madagascar, for example, have risen to the challenge, proving that with determination, creativity, and a commitment to quality, a local brand can become a national pride.

In 2017, BoGasy Madagascar emerged in a market where high-quality, tailor-made clothing was rare. Combining tradition with modern fashion trends, the brand quickly carved out a niche for itself. The name “BoGasy” itself is a fusion of “*Beau*” (meaning beautiful in French) and “*Gasy*” (a colloquial term for Malagasy), reflecting the essence of the brand—beautiful, and locally crafted products with a Malagasy identity. When BoGasy was founded, the idea was simple: to offer luxury clothing made from the finest materials, while highlighting the exceptional skills of local artisans. The brand specialized in custom suits, blending local fabrics with international fashion trends. This approach not only filled a gap in the market but also gave the brand a unique identity, one that appealed to both local and international clients.

Distinctive gender inclusion through community craft

A hallmark of BoGasy’s success lies in its dedication to empowering marginalized women in Madagascar. Recognizing the untapped potential within these communities, the brand trained and employed women from difficult circumstances, providing them with a stable income and a platform to showcase their talent. These women became highly skilled in sewing, embroidery, and other fine crafts, excelling in their work and contributing



Kelhie Razafiasimalala Vero Hanta,
Founder Manager of BoGasy Madagascar

to the brand’s reputation for quality. The spirit of family reigns within BoGasy. By prioritizing the well-being of its employees, the brand fosters a supportive work environment.

A humble workshop with national reach

Rather than investing in flashy storefronts, the founder chose to keep operations modest, using a small workshop behind her office. This allowed the business to focus on what mattered most—delivering consistent quality to customers while ensuring that the artisans were fairly compensated for their work.

A national pride

What began as a small workshop soon became a brand beloved by the Malagasy people. From politicians to celebrities, many notable figures turned to BoGasy for their bespoke clothing. The brand’s commitment to quality, paired with its distinctly Malagasy identity, helped it capture the hearts of a growing clientele. In addition to dressing local dignitaries, BoGasy’s reputation

spread internationally. Through word of mouth and a strong online presence, the brand reached clients across the world. Malagasy expatriates and foreign clients alike were drawn to the brand’s unique blend of craftsmanship and fashion-forward design. BoGasy has become a symbol of Vita Malagasy, proudly showcasing the talents of Malagasy artisans to a global audience.

Balancing sustainability with growth

While BoGasy continues to grow, it has never lost sight of its commitment to sustainability. The brand recently adopted an eco-responsible approach, practicing zero-waste fashion. This commitment to environmental responsibility resonates with many of today’s consumers, who are increasingly seeking out brands that prioritize sustainability alongside style.

By using locally sourced materials and minimizing waste, BoGasy not only reduces its environmental impact but also supports the local economy. This approach ensures that the brand remains true to its roots while also appealing to a global market that values ethical fashion.

BoGasy Madagascar embodies perseverance, innovation, and craftsmanship. From selling T-shirts as a child to leading a luxury brand, the founder represents Malagasy entrepreneurial spirit.

Aiming to expand globally as an ambassador for Vita Malagasy, BoGasy stays true to quality, sustainability, and community. The brand offers a blueprint for success by honoring local identity and elevating Malagasy artisanship on the world stage.

 Edited by **Océane Ramasimanana**

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Villa
OASIS

The Villa Oasis is an upscale haven, bathed in transparency and enveloped in greenery. Every element has been meticulously designed to infuse this villa with an atmosphere of luxury and comfort.



Villa
TIERRA

Villa Tierra features a glass patio surrounded on all sides, offering panoramic views, structuring the space and creating a light well in the center of the house.



Villa
AQUA

Villa Aqua is designed with a uniqueness of volume that invites sunlight and fresh air into every room, including the kitchen and dining room that open onto the garden.

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