



*From left are Philip, John, and Shumi, three artisans with Serrv's partners in Kenya whose lives have been transformed through the support and reliable income they receive from their work in fair trade.*

## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

FALL 2015

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## A model that truly changes lives

*Danielle Alling, Graphic Design + Project Coordinator*

In June I had the privilege of visiting three of Serrv's long-term partners in Kenya to gather photos, learn more about the work they do, and listen to the artisans speak about their lives. It was my first overseas trip for Serrv but not my first time in East Africa—just a few years ago I was serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Tanzania—and excited as I was to visit a new country and learn first-hand about the impact Serrv makes, I wasn't expecting to see much I hadn't already seen before.

In some ways that was true: I visited Serrv partner Nyabigena Soapstone Carvers, based in a small village in western Kenya which looked not unlike the village I once served in. I saw families who made a living farming or raising livestock, some of them successful in their efforts, others struggling to make ends meet. I saw children eager to attend school and parents doing everything they can to ensure their children succeed, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. For many people living in that small village, the money they had left in their pocket every month depended on factors outside of their control: weather, sudden illness, family or friends needing support. Through my time in East Africa, I've seen this story again and again. But the story that I hadn't seen first hand was the myriad ways in which fair trade has an impact on these lives.

Take Philip, for example. Happily married with six children, Philip has been working with Nyabigena Soapstone Carvers for 18 years. Philip says he is easily able to support his family these days, though with a large family things used to

be difficult. Because of the income he earned carving soapstone, Philip saved money and purchased a cow which now provides he and his family with a daily supply of milk. In addition to that, he is able to sell the surplus of milk to generate additional income. This extra amount, made possible through his work, has given Philip and his family the security that they'll have enough when unexpected expenses arise.

In Nairobi, life is vastly different from rural western Kenya. Thousands of people reside in informal settlements or "slums" with extremely high population density, leaving few opportunities for formal work available. Serrv partner Trinity Jewellery Crafts employs people from the slums and teaches them jewelry-making skills that enable them to find their way out of these poor living conditions. Every artisan I met at Trinity spoke highly of their work, particularly John, whose happiness is evident in his smile. John has been with Trinity since 1985, and in addition to making jewelry he oversees the production line as Workshop Manager. He also designs many of the pieces. "Over these 30 years I've seen myself growing," he says, "and I've raised a family and been able to take care of their needs."

My last stop in Kenya was to Bombolulu Workshops in coastal Mombasa. Bombolulu employs artisans with physical disabilities, providing vital income to people who need it so urgently. Shumi, who has worked with Bombolulu for nine years, suffers from polio and cannot use pedal-operated sewing machines. Instead she works by cutting, ironing, and finishing textile pieces. "It's important for us to find work we are able to do, because we face challenges every day," she says. "Fetching water is difficult and I pay someone to help me. I must take public transport to the market or pay someone to help me buy goods when I need them. Without work, life with a physical disability can be very difficult." In her nine years working in fair trade, Shumi says she's been able to lead a good life, sending her daughter to school and supporting her mother.

These are just three of the many inspiring stories I heard during my trip. The artisans in each place I visited lead such different lives and face such difficult challenges, yet the thread that connects each is the positive changes and better life that they have been able to achieve. These and other stories would not be possible without generous and dedicated support from the fair trade community.

## You can help our partners recover when disaster strikes.



Deukmuar, Get Paper Industry, Nepal

When tragedies occur, Serrv is there for our partners. We provide funds to help them rebuild, accept delayed deliveries of our orders with no penalty, and often place special orders or reorders to provide additional income opportunity as artisans struggle to get back on their feet.

Donate\* online at [serrv.org/donate](https://serrv.org/donate) or call 1.800.423.0071.

*\*Serrv is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Visit [serrv.org/donate](https://serrv.org/donate) for financial and regulation information.*

## Aglobal fair trade movement

Serrv is a founding member of the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO), a network of fair traders in 70 countries. Members must demonstrate 100% commitment to fair trade and adhere to the 10 fair trade principles.

The WFTO hosts a biennial conference to gather members for networking and to discuss pressing topics. The 2015 conference was held in Milan, Italy, and was attended by more than 265 members, consultants, volunteers, students, and more. Serrv staff attended the conference to meet with several of our artisan and farmer partner organizations and to engage in discussions that chart the direction for the global fair trade movement. Through democratic vote, the membership chose to pursue a review of fair wages, research about 'domestic' fair trade and gender issues, and revisions to the organization's global structure.

The WFTO has also developed a Fair Trade Guarantee System which certifies fair trade organizations. While Serrv has always been a verified WFTO member, we are undertaking the next phase of this deeper, external review of our practices.

It is exciting and inspiring to be a part of this global network of committed fair traders. Serrv CEO Bob Chase currently serves on the WFTO Board of Directors.

# Nepal updates

We receive regular updates from our partners in Nepal who were affected by the terrible earthquakes which struck last spring. Numerous artisans lost their homes and workshops. Through your support, Serrv was able to send donations quickly for rebuilding and to provide loans for temporary housing and home repairs.

Get Paper Industry (GPI), one of our partners in Nepal, was able to use donated funds from Serrv for emergency support including offering artisans interest-free loans for rebuilding. They also provided relief materials in three communities such as food, electrolytes, mats, and dry milk for children.

We are grateful for the flood of donations and well wishes from Serrv supporters. We have recently sent \$5,000 in additional funds and hope to send even more by the end of the year. You can help by giving a tax-deductible donation\* and by purchasing items from

 Nepal in our catalog, marked with this symbol, and online.



*Two large earthquakes and subsequent aftershocks destroyed the homes and workshops of many artisans.*

To find the most up-to-date information we receive from our partners, visit [serrv.org/Nepal](http://serrv.org/Nepal).

# A holistic approach to wellbeing

Improving the quality of life for marginalized artisans and their families is one of our core values. Through house visits with artisans, our partner Noah's Ark learned that some of the women artisans did not have toilets in their homes and had to go "in the woods" during the night when it is not safe. In response, they established a hygiene and sanitation project to build facilities in or near artisans' homes that will provide safety and comfort for the women and their families. They've built six so far and have plans to build more.

This is one of Noah's Arks' recent projects that Samuel Masih, Director, is most proud of. We had the pleasure of welcoming him to our Madison, WI office in August to hear updates and discuss future collaborations. Samuel spoke of this and other inspiring social development projects Noah's Ark



*Serrv CEO Bob Chase and Noah's Ark Founder and Director Samuel Masih.*

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*"The artisans we employ appreciate stability, regular work, fair wages, product innovation, and learning about fair trade conditions."*

*—Samuel Masih, Founder and Director, Noah's Ark*

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has established based on artisans' needs, many of which focus on health and wellbeing. Three times a year they hold health checkups for artisans and their wider communities that include dental and eye exams, and have built water filters and storage tanks for artisans' homes. Samuel explains, "In India, sometimes the facilities do not work correctly and people may not have alternative options for clean water and maintaining health." They also provide elementary education for local children, sewing training for young women, and other skills training workshops. Noah's Ark is deeply committed to improving the wellbeing of marginalized artisans and their families in India, and your support of Serrv helps to make these programs possible.



*Our new Desert Sands Box, with hand hammered and hand chiseled relief detail on the lid, made by artisans at Noah's Ark.*



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to eradicate poverty wherever it resides  
 by providing opportunity and support  
 to artisans and farmers worldwide

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Join our growing global community



## Coffee for a cause

With a namesake of “excellent quality” in the local language, Gumutindo is a coffee farming cooperative which supports 7,000 farmers and their communities on the fertile volcanic slopes of Mt. Elgon in eastern Uganda. Women are involved in many levels of the cooperative structure as farmers, certification officers, managers, quality control staff, and board members. A percentage of sales is directed right back into the communities through social programs like solar power, water tanks, and school desks for local children.

Try beans from Gumutindo in our new African Highlands blend, knowing your purchase is helping to sustain these coffee-growing communities.

Find our complete collection of organic coffee at [serrv.org/coffee](http://serrv.org/coffee).

