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Ethical Fashion Initiative in Haiti gets a boost from USAID

(Port-au-Prince) The International Trade Center (ITC) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have teamed up to boost the Ethical Fashion Initiative (EFI) in Haiti. The new partnership aims to empower Haitian artisans and reposition the Haitian handicraft sector in the international fashion marketplace. EFI works to connect small groups of artisans to international buyers at the top end of the global fashion market. With new funds from USAID, EFI's inclusive business model will enable these 'micro-producers' to further develop local creativity, foster employment and empowerment, reduce poverty, and promote gender equality.

The new partnership will add to the sustainability of the EFI business model, in which hubs act as an interface between artisans and international buyers, facilitating collective work for the communities of micro-producers within a clear governance structure. This project will be implemented over two years and will integrate micro-producer cooperatives into the international value chain of fashion.

EFI's initial work in Haiti with six core groups of micro-producers supported the production of 15,000 units of high-end fashion products - hand-painted bracelets, papier-mâché pieces, carved horn bangles and other artisanal produced jewellery - showcased during Milan Fashion Week with distribution in fashion capitals including Rio de Janeiro, Milan, Tokyo and New York. The collaboration between USAID and ITC will bolster efforts to stabilise the relation with international brands (Osklen and Stella Jean) and increase the artisans' income by 150 percent following orders from fashion houses in the US, Europe and Brazil.

"Linking micro-producers across the global marketplace, building export capacity for previously underserved but productive communities, and harnessing the power and visibility of the fashion world, the EFI is poised to be an innovative development model. Of particular importance is its promise to increase economic opportunity for women. We are pleased to support this initiative, which helps spotlight to the broader international community some of the innate strengths of Haiti's culture, entrepreneurial spirit and artistry as it looks to the future," said John Groarke, USAID Mission Director.

"Artisans are the backbone of the fashion industry. Their hands are the real force of fashion and we believe there is a great potential in the skills and capacities of Haitian micro-artisans. However, the fashion industry is a competitive sector and this project presents many challenges. Through the market-based approach of the Ethical Fashion Initiative based on the understanding of cultural specificities and application of fair and decent working condition, we hope to make this challenging project a success," said Simone Cipriani, Chief Technical Advisor, Ethical Fashion Initiative, International Trade Centre

ITC's ETHICAL FASHION INITIATIVE

The Ethical Fashion Initiative is a flagship programme of the International Trade Centre, a joint agency of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization.

The Ethical Fashion Initiative links the world's top fashion talents to marginalised artisans - the majority of them women - in East and West Africa, Haiti and the West Bank. Active since 2009, the Initiative enables artisans living in urban and rural poverty to connect with the global fashion chain. The Initiative's success is built on its business model and physical infrastructure of design centres connected to central hubs in Nairobi, Accra, Addis Ababa, Ouagadougou, Ramallah and now Port-au-Prince. The Ethical Fashion Initiative also enables Africa's rising generation of fashion talent to forge sustainable and fulfilling creative collaborations with local artisans. Under its slogan, "NOT CHARITY, JUST WORK." the Ethical Fashion Initiative advocates a fairer global fashion industry. The Ethical Fashion Initiative is proud of its long-term partnerships including Adidas, Bottletop, Chan Luu, Instituto-E, Isetan, Karen Walker, Mimco, Myer, Osklen, sass & bide, Stella Jean, Stella McCartney, United Arrows, Vivienne Westwood and Vogue Italia.

About the International Trade Centre

ITC is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC assists small and medium-sized enterprises in developing and transition economies to become more competitive in global markets, thereby contributing to sustainable economic development within the frameworks of the [Aid-for-Trade agenda](#) and the [Millennium Development Goals](#).

About USAID

The U.S. Agency for International Development is leading the U.S. Government's efforts to end extreme poverty and promote resilient, democratic societies. <http://www.usaid.gov/haiti>

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