

# Kenyan Jeweler Breaks into U.S. Market through USAID Trade Show Support

SUCCESS STORY

OCTOBER 2017

## In Brief

Kenya-based artisan Nicola Onyango of Urban Artefacts receives her first U.S. order at Hub-supported Coterie trade show in New York, September 2017. Nicola has a clear vision for a simple aesthetic that melds nomad with chic. U.S. customers love it. As of October 2017, she has shipped that order and is now pursuing 10 hot leads, also from Coterie. Because of Coterie, she has a sales pipeline in the U.S. and a vision for growth. Urban Artefacts is just one of 1,345 firms that the USAID Hub has supported through technical assistance in product design and marketing to help them reach their export goals.

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Nicola at her booth in Coterie.

Nicola Onyango started her artisanal handmade jewelry company, Urban Artefacts, just two years ago. She stocks four Nairobi shops with her designs, which are mostly brass and impeccably polished. Her four Italian-trained, Kenyan employees expertly buff every piece to ensure quality and longevity. She's building a brand of well-made, contemporary jewelry with materials indigenous to East Africa, and she's just reached the U.S. market with the help of the USAID East Africa Trade and Investment Hub. Urban Artefacts is just one of 1,345 firms that the USAID Hub has supported through technical assistance in product design and marketing to help them reach their export goals.

U.S. retailer LOUISE & ELEANOR is an online shop committed to high fashion and extraordinary women. Their website states: "We travel the world to find designers, innovators and one-of-a-kind luxury handbags." In September 2017, LOUISE & ELEANOR found Nicola and Urban Artefacts at the Sourcing at Coterie show in New York City.

The USAID Hub supported several East African artisans to attend Coterie for the kind of business linkages that Nicola made with

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LOUISE & ELEANOR. Nicola has already shipped her initial order to LOUISE & ELEANOR and anticipates more orders to come.

The Coterie show encourages sustainable buyer/seller relationships where buyers invest in their producers for mutual gain. In the case of LOUISE & ELEANOR, Meghan Tierney, the owner, plans to showcase both Nicola’s design and her story – Nicola is a savvy woman entrepreneur who lives in Nairobi, Kenya, buying her jewelry supplies from the Jua Kali (KiSwahili for out in the hot sun) vendors who line local market places. She employs four full-time staff and is looking to grow her brand while keeping it authentic.

In addition to LOUISE & ELEANOR, Nicola says she has ten hot leads from Coterie that she is now pursuing.

U.S. trade shows link sellers to buyers and broaden the perspective of East African artisans who are keen to enter the export market.

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The Hub’s trade show advisors help East African entrepreneurs navigate the trade show process, curate their booths, and follow up with interested U.S. buyers.

Nicola didn’t need much help with her booth design. She has a certificate from Sotheby’s Institute of Art, ten years of international experience in marketing and communications, and a clear vision for a simple aesthetic that melds nomad with chic. U.S. customers love it. She just needed the opportunity to find the buyers that will introduce her designs to the U.S. market place. LOUISE & ELEANOR is just the start. In the words of Nicola, “I’ve created a sales pipeline because of Coterie.”

Hub supported trade promotion and African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) activities have facilitated \$284 million in exports since project start, September 2014. These activities have also supported the creation of nearly 38,000 jobs. Overall, the AGOA trade agreement has resulted in 300,000 jobs for Africans and 120,000 jobs for Americans.