

# Entrepreneurial Youth Gain Through Access to U.S. Market

SUCCESS STORY

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## In Brief

LULEA accessories company declares Sourcing at Coterie trade show as the starting point of its success, and it started with the youngest member of the family-run business. She designed the hot-selling parachute bag and is now hiring other young women just out of university to contribute to the family business. The USAID Hub's support to LULEA demonstrates USAID's contribution to beneficiary self-reliance and resilience. The LULEA brand is taking off and so are employment opportunities with the company.



In 2013, Chesneau came to Kenya and fell in love. He started Luxury Leather Africa, or LULEA, a luxury leather goods enterprise that is committed to social impact through job creation and training. Above, Chesneau with his Kenyan family, including Verline, who designed the parachute bag. (The parachute bag is shown rolled and open by Verline's mom, Nancy, middle.)

LULEA's "Parachute Bag" was the high-demand product at the 2017 Sourcing at Coterie trade show in New York City. Coterie organizers gushed about it, trade show attendees flocked to the LULEA booth to view it, and U.S. buyers placed on-the-spot orders for it. Edmond Chesneau, the patriarch of the Kenya-based, family-run company declared his visit to the New York City trade show as the "starting point of our success."

Chesneau, a Frenchman by birth, is not new to the luxury leather handbag market. He spent 20 years in Ireland building his brand, which is his surname, and training craftsman. He received training from a craftsman for Hermes, arguably the most recognized leather-focused luxury accessories company in the world. He now trains others.

But it's not Chesneau who is transforming LULEA, it's his young Kenyan daughter, Verline. She designed the hot-selling parachute bag and is now hiring other young women just out of university to contribute to the family business. Since its success at Coterie, LULEA has hired eight new full-time employees.

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In 2013, Chesneau came to Kenya and fell in love. He started Luxury Leather Africa, or LULEA, a luxury leather goods enterprise that is committed to social impact through job creation and training. He considers his factory workshop a center of excellence, helping his Kenyan staff to master the leather workmanship that captures the attention of the export market and adds value to the sale of LULEA products. His daughter is a clear example of this success.

The East Africa Trade and Investment Hub (the Hub), funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), provides firm-level technical assistance to East African businesses like LULEA to build their export capacity and facilitate connections with U.S. buyers. This increases duty-free exports under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and deepens trade relations with the U.S.

The USAID Hub has provided export assistance to 1,431 firms since October 2014; LULEA is just one example. These firms have achieved \$312.1 million in exports under AGOA.

The USAID Hub's support to LULEA demonstrates USAID's contribution to beneficiary self-reliance and resilience. The LULEA brand is taking off and so are employment opportunities with the company. "This is what we needed to realize our potential," said LULEA Founder Edmond Chesneau. Verline is confident that they can.