

Tejidos punto a mano en alpaca de prendas de vestir desde los Andes Peruanos
(Hand-woven alpaca fabric articles of clothing from the Peruvian Andes)

Summary

The project “Tejidos punto a mano en alpaca de prendas de vestir desde los Andes Peruanos” (“Hand-woven alpaca fabric articles of clothing from the Peruvian Andes”) is an initiative of rural female weavers, indigenous quechua speakers from Mañazo, an isolated district of the Puno department of Peru. The idea developed inside a Mother’s Club when a group of women, encouraged by a nun, decided to improve their hand-woven fabric and to look for marketing channels aside from the typical tourist spots in which “all sell the same thing at very low prices”.

They soon realized that they needed to improve the quality of the fabric and create a more modern design. With the support of the Puno-Cuzco Project Coordinator, they received lessons in quality, finishing and design.

Today, they rely on an established business that produces alpaca fabric of an export-quality and, at this point in time, exports almost all of their production to the United States.

“Artesanías Pachamama S.A” has a Board of Directors, composed of members elected in the General Assembly of Members; a Production Committee, in charge of receiving the orders, defining the raw materials necessary for the requested models and making purchases from a business that supplies wool of the required quality for exportation; a Storage Committee, which receives the primary material and distributes it among weaving members according to the work plan defined by the Assembly, a plan that respects the talent and time availability of every one. This Committee also receives cancellations. In addition, there is a Quality Committee, which supervises – in weekly meetings – the weaving process of every one of the pieces, advises and directs the weavers and reviews the finished pieces to assure its excellence. Finally, there is an Exportation Committee, whose members, with the Board of Directors, return to check the quality of every fabric, put on the corresponding labels, verify the completion of all requested work and pack it. Later, an accountant, also from the community and contracted by the Association, prepares the required documentation and carries out the needed negotiations for its exportation.

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The business generates an annual income close to 300 dollars for each of the 67 members, an income level higher than that generated by farming and which, in many cases, is the main source of income for the families.

In the process, the women have become stronger people, have confronted the resistance of their husbands against them working and have supported themselves. Clearly, the impact of this initiative goes beyond the income that it generates and it is an example for many women that live in rural areas and whose inclusion in income generating activities is fundamental in improving the poverty in the rural environment. It shows that it is possible to unite, become stronger, face the opposition of men, generate resources and impose the cultural change with respect to women's rights and the value of their contribution to reduce poverty in their families and their communities.

The social development is also admirable: with resources that they collect from foreign donators, they improve, in shifts, a community problem by feeding the poor boys, girls, youth and elderly in the community.