

CREACT4MED Mapping: Best Practices

Application Number: BP_31

1. Basic info*	
Email Address	augraindesesame@yahoo.fr
Title of the Best Practice	Au Grain de Sésame
Name of the Applicant	Asmaa BENACHIR
Is the BP a registered legal entity?	Yes, I will send the certificate of registration by email
Website	www.augraindesesame.org
Country	Morocco;
Subsector	Arts and culture (cultural heritage, gastronomy, visual arts, performing arts, leisure and recreation, crafts); Design (software, advertising, architecture, interior design, graphic design, industrial design, fashion); Women empowerment through art educatio
Category	a) Cultural and creative entrepreneurship; b) Ecosystem enablement; c) Local and regional cooperation;
Year of establishment and duration	12/2/2007
Target group of the BP	Target groups: marginalized craft women and unemployed women, young girls dropping out of school, aged 15 and over, with a daily wage between 0 et 5 USD.
1. Best Practice Characteristics	
Problem Statement	Numerous studies show that when more income is put in the hands of women, family nutrition, health, and education improve. Educated women's acquired knowledge is spread to family and community members. In Morocco, women are disproportionately poor leaving them little time, money, or opportunity for education or professional development. While Moroccan women make up only 12% of the country's workforce, they make up 80% of the country's craft industry workers. Morocco's craft sector is central to the national identity, constitutes 20% of the nation's economy, and depends entirely on women's creative labor and expertise; yet the craftswomen remain poor and underrepresented in the country.

<p>Mission Statement & Value proposition</p>	<p>Au Grain de Sésame is a woman owned, woman operated social enterprise based in Rabat, Morocco with a mission of empowering marginalized women.</p> <p>Mission Using art and sustainable design training to empower marginalized women to believe in themselves.</p> <p>Vision Make art a vector of sustainable development in the framework of climate change and through respect for human values.</p> <p>Goals for the Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage eco-friendly consumption, - Support women's empowerment - Enjoy functional, innovative, and eco-friendly products, - Do good for the community and the world. <p>Goals for the Beneficiaries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving women's lives using art as a vehicle for social change, - Skill building through exchange and dialogue, - Raising awareness of the socio-economic importance of environmental protection and conservation, - Protecting cultural heritage, <p>The program encompass training on sustainable design development from the square and local identity, product line, quality control, fair prices, packaging and labelling, basic knowledge on technique of sales, customers access and</p>
	<p>fair-trade participation.</p> <p>Also thanks to collaborations, women are trained on: writing and reading, basic knowledges on computer, women rights and participate to different events (fair trade, presentation, ...).</p> <p>At the end of the two years training the beneficiaries have the choice between working for AGS workshop from their home or launching their own social enterprise, cooperative, or NGO.</p>

<p>Results and growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of eco-friendly products developed by the women beneficiaries until market access, - Number of women that have launched a project, with a focus on green projects, - Number of national and international students and consumers involved in the project <p>More than 50% of the women involved or that have been involved in our training are employed. The other women are part of a craft cooperative in marginalized area and don't have the skills to develop a craft product with high quality that respond to the need of a market in demand of handmade craft product with a sustainable design. 60% of them have never gone to school, 30% have the level of primary school and 7% have gone to high school but never finish their study and 3% have a bachelor or the level of a bachelor. Our target female population is aged 15 and over, made up of craftswomen in a precarious situation or unemployed women and young girls in a situation of school failure and / or unemployed, also localized booth urban and rural, eager to improve their living conditions.</p> <p>50% of the women trained (nearly one hundred women) are from cooperatives and during the training they developed new products ecofriendly and handmade and, as they are also trained on market access, at the end of the training their business grow. 10% of those women who are the leaders of their groups, launched themselves new cooperatives through the development of new craft product with sustainable design, involving other craft women and also young unemployed men to be in charge of internet sale and marketing. In general those young men are the sons or family member of those women. As a sample the last project developed by an AGS women beneficiaries is a cooperative of carpets made from natural white and black wool, with no added dyes or coloring, and using ancestral carpet-making techniques.</p> <p>The other 50% women are not member of any legal entity or NGO. After the training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 20% of them developed NGO and train now other women to develop their skills in craft. As a sample, the NGO "Dir El Khir" in Rabat launched by an AGS trained women, train actually 250 women from Rabat and Salé. Through a collaboration between Au Grain de Sesame and the hub center for youth Es.Maroc.org all the members of this NGO have been trained recently on the use of a computer and internet. - 20% choose to work for AGS workshop from their home. Raison why we have established a collaboration with WPI to work on their laboratory on the development of this new technique. - The other 10% of women choose after the training not to be involved in AGS workshop for health or personal raisons, or because they found a new job..
<p>Strategy to be financially sustainable</p>	<p>Phase 1 - 3 months duration : in collaboration with WPI (Worcester Polytechnic University) work at WPI laboratory with students and their teachers to develop and improve the production process of the new ecological product created by Au Grain de Sésame and for</p>

	<p>which the patent application has been filed in May 2023 at ÔMPIC Casablanca,</p> <p>Phase 2 – 9 months duration for test and launch : Work on prototyping and launching production of the product by AGS, following the results obtained in phase 1, and according to the marketing plan established in collaboration with Pyxera Global's team of Pro Bono experts as part of AGS's selection by Pyxera Global's 3M IMPACT program. A part of the production will be made by the Au Grain de Sésame beneficiaries women from their home.</p> <p>Phase 3 - 9 months duration for test and launch : Part of the revenues generated by phase 2 will finance the launch of Au Grain de Sésame's "Empowering Women through Art and Cultural Exchange" online training courses for vulnerable women. In the form of a website and mobile application, these training courses are easy to access and use, whatever the women's level of education, or their geolocation. The architecture of the site has already been designed in collaboration with the Club des Etudiants de l'Ecole Hassania des Ingénieurs and Au Grain de Sésame.</p> <p>Phase 4 - 3 months duration for launch: Women who have successfully completed the training courses will be able to launch short video capsules in which, in return for a fee, they will teach visitors to the site (international art and design students, designers, decorators, artists, etc.) their ecological and sustainable craft skills online. This is made possible by short video capsules produced in collaboration with the Rabat School of Cinema and Audiovisual Arts, ISCA Rabat. A presentation of their story and products will also be shown alongside their training video.</p> <p>These four successive phases will enable Au Grain de Sésame to achieve sustainability, and the women benefiting from the training to achieve resilience by having a stable income, whatever their social, economic or health situation.</p>
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2. Impact (please complete at least 3 of the 6 sub-sections)	
Economic significance	Since 2015, Au Grain de Sesame (AGS) has trained more than two hundred women in the regions of Rabat-Salé-Kenitra, the Oriental, Taza, and the Rif, and we developed more than 50 innovative handmade eco-friendly craft products with a sustainable design, that our beneficiaries are still selling in the national and international handmade craft market.

<p>Replicability and upscaling</p>	<p>Replicability: our training program is based on local waste assessment for product recycling, product development from local identity, line of product, quality control, fair pricing, packaging, and labeling, and market access. A training adapted to the level of the beneficiaries and can be replicated in any region of Morocco or outside Morocco.</p> <p>Upscaling: actually, we have a collaboration with Worcester Polytechnique Institute (WPI, USA) to work in collaboration in the WPI laboratory to develop the industrial process of manufacturing one of our innovative Au Grain de Sesame products made from recycled paper that WPI assesses with a high potential of industrialization and can generate a great revenue to AGS to make its program a durable one.</p> <p>As we want to develop our training website online, we have established several collaborations with national and international schools, universities, and institutes.</p>
<p>Employment generation</p>	<p>Our beneficiaries receive insurance and a salary based on the Moroccan minimum wage during their training. After their training, they have the choice between launching their own green small enterprise, cooperative, or working at the AGS workshop from home. In case they choose to work at the AGS workshop, the beneficiaries receive a salary based on the Moroccan minimum wage and 30% of the benefit generated by the product sales.</p>
<p>Inclusiveness</p>	<p>Our training program equips beneficiaries with the skills they need to develop a project based on the creation, development, and launch of a product combining ancestral handmade craft know-how and recycling techniques, giving them access to a stable income and meeting the needs of their children and families.</p> <p>The women gain in confidence and become leaders in their communities, spreading the knowledge they have acquired and awareness of the socioeconomic potential of environmental preservation.</p> <p>We give training to refugees and migrant women through collaborations with NGO that works with migrant and refugees women. And in the future as cultural exchange is an important part of our training we aim to involve refugees and migrant women in our training program.</p>
<p>Social impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving women's lives using art as a vehicle for social change - Skill building through exchange and dialogue - Raising awareness of the socio-economic importance of environmental protection and conservation - Protecting cultural heritage - Improve self-confidence, skills, and competencies through the exchange

	<p>of knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase employment in the craft sector and enable social integration - Reinforce awareness regarding the importance of introducing technologies in the craft production process in the framework of climate change - Create a solution that brings human change through the exchange - Use the powerful tools of art and innovative technology to develop human capital and cross-cultural understanding and contribute to sustainable socio-economic development - Encourage social integration in emerging countries like Morocco, while prioritizing intercultural dialogue.
<p>Innovation</p>	<p>Our business model is based on a circular economy and collaborative approach. Our beneficiaries are involved in all levels of our social enterprise, as for example as part of their training, they participate in the products price elaboration, event participation, ...</p> <p>Our training program is based on the development of our beneficiaries of innovative handmade craft products until market access. Also, the products manufactured at the AGS workshop are based on an innovative technique of recycling paper that received many international prizes and awards: 2013 Seed Price, an initiative of the United Nations for the Environment, 2014/15 first laureate of the American Museum Alliance, ...</p>
<p>Environmental sustainability</p>	<p>Our business model is based on a circular economy as we reuse the maximum we can and all our products developed are based on the reuse of waste like paper, plastic, cardboard, wood, rubbers, .. And the use of natural dyes and vernis.</p> <p>The beneficiaries gain awareness of the socio-economic importance of the environment and a source of well-being.</p> <p>With our beneficiaries' women we recycle every kind of waste we generate during our work: paper, fabric, plastic, water, food, paper waste. We train our women to generate the less waste as possible and to reuse as much as possible.</p> <p>We estimate only the quantity of recycled paper we use each year: which depending of the programs developed is between 500kg to 1200kg per year.</p>

3. Challenges and lessons learned

Challenges	<p>In 2019, the community space of AGS had to close due to restoration work, as part of the rehabilitation program of the Rabat medina, carried out by the Moroccan government and financed by the UNESCO. An eleven-month closure prompted AGS to launch remote training on WhatsApp and by email with artisans located in different regions of Morocco. This temporary solution has proven to be useful and effective and may also allow AGS to continue activities in the context of the Covid19 health crisis and would benefit from being accessible free of charge to all women and girls. A closure for renovation, followed by a closure for containment, prompted AGS to permanently close their community space, the place of their income-generating activities (art gallery, Permanente showroom developed by the AGS training program beneficiaries, EcoBio market, Cultural Exchange Program).</p> <p>Currently the Empowering Women through Art and Cultural Exchange program is maintaining now online and face-to-face, thanks to the personal funding of the founder and Manager of AGS, who is also a visual artist working from her art studio.</p> <p>This proved to be a useful and effective solution, which may also enable us</p>
	<p>to continue our activities in the context of the COVID-19 health crisis, and which would benefit from being accessible free of charge to all women and girls.</p> <p>In 2023 AGS received a 5000USD small grant from Global Giving thanks to a recommendation of Pyxera global which selected AGS for its Pro Bono program. Thanks to this grant we trained five women on the development of a new eco-friendly product made from recycled paper with the perspective that those five women will launch a cooperative thanks to this new product and involve other women through training.</p>
Lessons learned	<p>As we faced many challenges in the past, we will face others in the future.</p> <p>My deep conviction is that the constant search for new, innovative approaches in the fields of culture and education remains a necessary approach, capable of resolving the most complex situations and leading to improved living conditions, mutual understanding and better living together while respecting human and environmental values.</p>
4. Demographic Information	
Is the organization led by a woman?	Yes
What age is the lead of the organization?	Over 35 years old

