



Members of the 'Associação Palma Grossa' craft group display bags they have woven. With the support of AKFC, the 10-member group in Bilibiza is learning new craft-making techniques and designs. While they previously only made floor mats for their own use, they now also make bags to sell.

Photos: Lucas Cuervo Moura



TACKLING POVERTY WITH ARTISTRY: SUPPORTING CRAFT PRODUCERS IN NORTHERN MOZAMBIQUE

The province of Cabo Delgado on the northern coast of Mozambique is one of the most important producers of traditional handicrafts in the country – but it is also one of the poorest provinces.

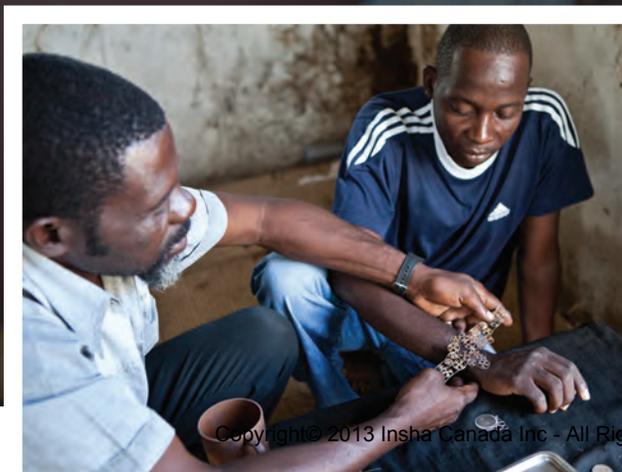
Artisans create crafts such as jewellery, woven mats and baskets to be sold in other parts of Mozambique, but the craftworkers often lack the networks and resources to make the most of their skills.

Aga Khan Foundation Canada (AKFC) is working with Aga Khan Foundation Mozambique (AKFM) to support craft entrepreneurs in Cabo Delgado as part of a larger program that tackles poverty by improving food security and promoting economic empowerment in the region.

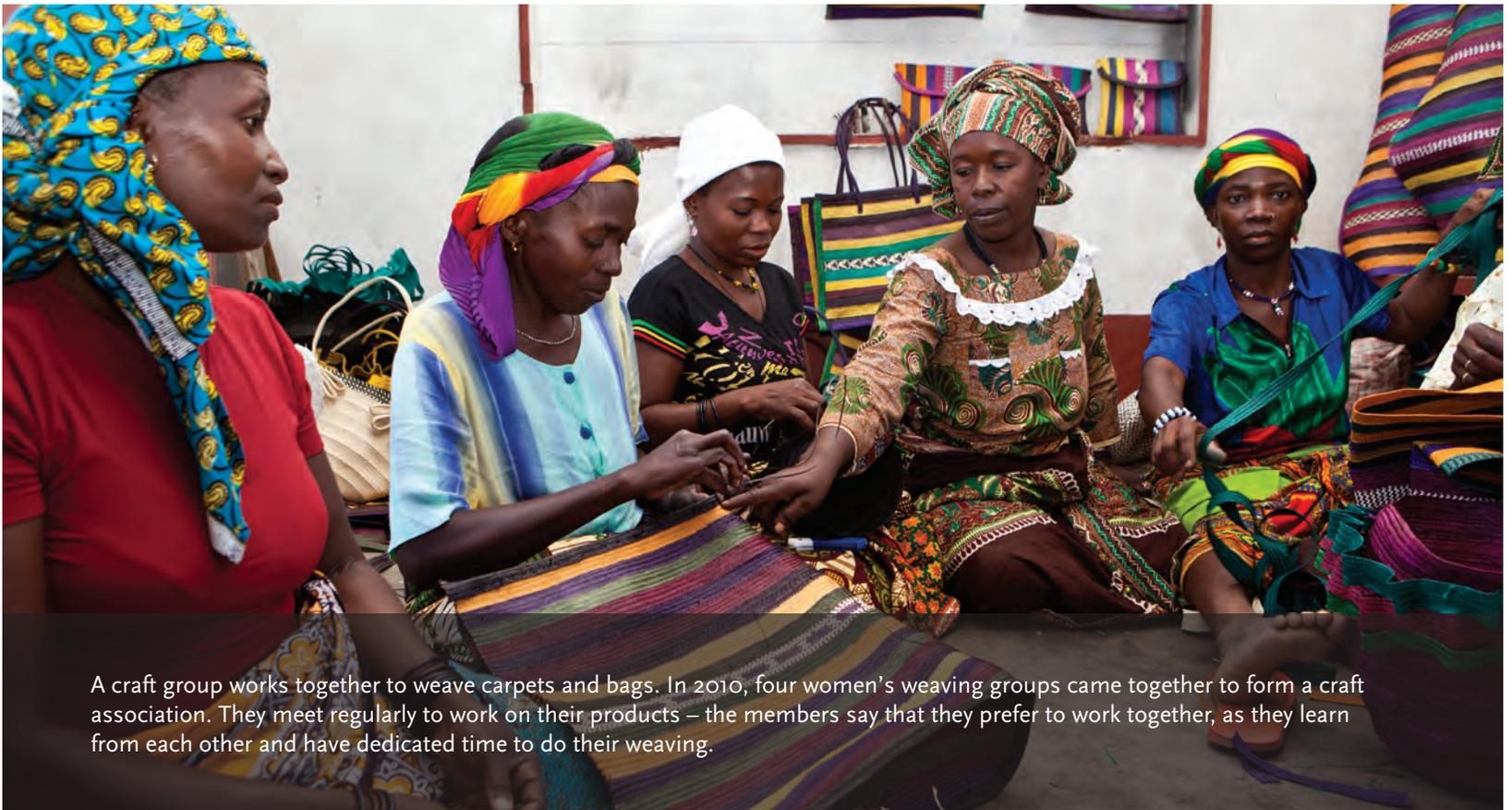
Drawing on the region's long history of craft production, this program – funded jointly with the Government of Canada – helps artisans increase their income by establishing networks of craft associations. These networks help to improve access to raw materials, develop new designs, and respond to market demand in national and international markets – crucial in a province where more than half of the population lives in poverty.



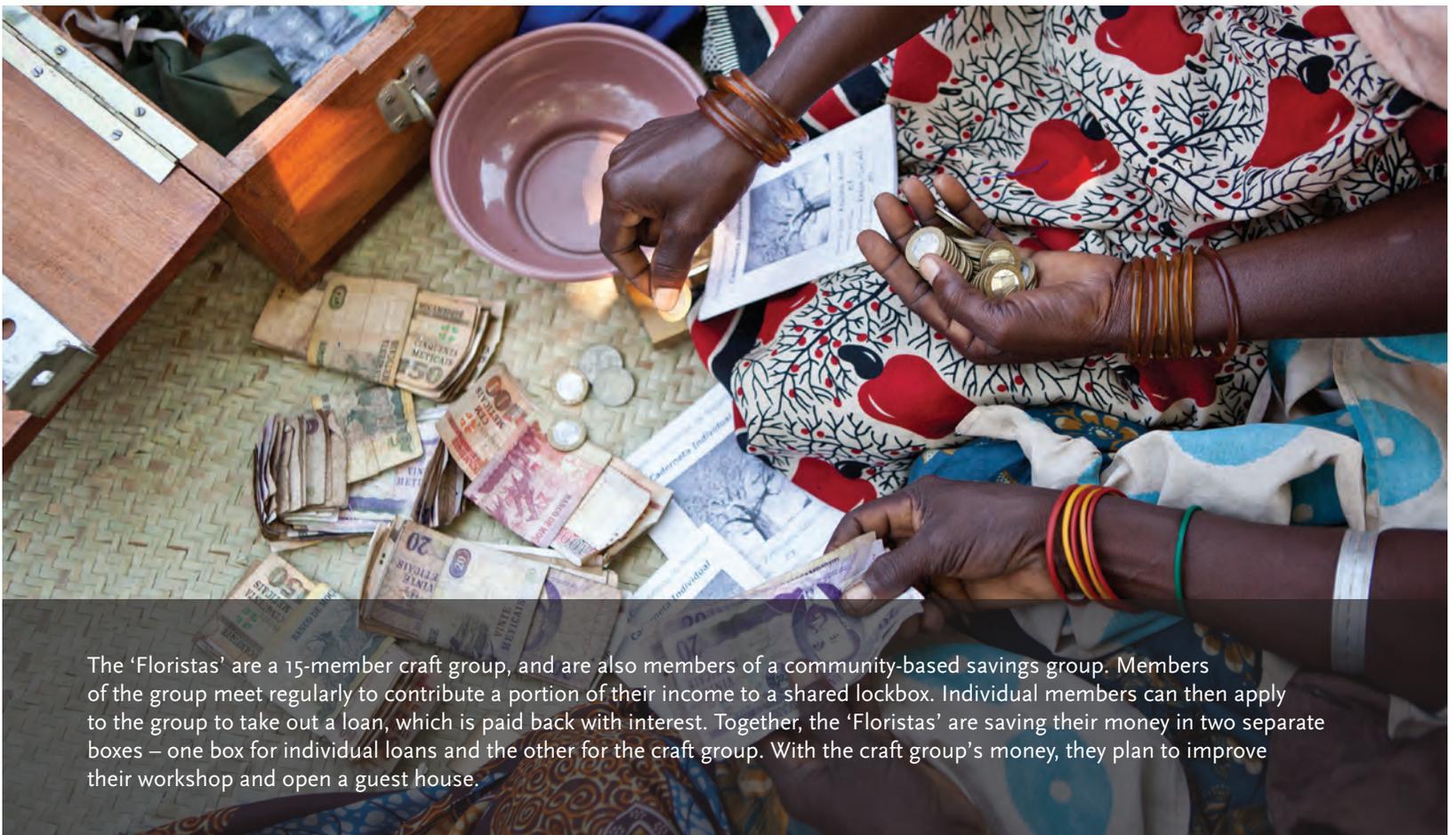
A member of a craft group works on a woven mat. The craft association's products are sold through stores in the port cities of Pemba and Maputo, which gives the artisans access to larger markets. Since they started working together their incomes have increased, which goes towards buying food and clothes for their families. Members are also learning to read through a literacy group.



Through this program, artisans have come together to work in teams. By joining forces, they streamline their processes and earn greater profits. These silversmiths can now afford to buy high-quality silver sourced from South Africa, which has improved the quality of their work. They have also broadened their markets and are selling their products in other parts of Mozambique, as well as the United States and



A craft group works together to weave carpets and bags. In 2010, four women's weaving groups came together to form a craft association. They meet regularly to work on their products – the members say that they prefer to work together, as they learn from each other and have dedicated time to do their weaving.



The 'Floristas' are a 15-member craft group, and are also members of a community-based savings group. Members of the group meet regularly to contribute a portion of their income to a shared lockbox. Individual members can then apply to the group to take out a loan, which is paid back with interest. Together, the 'Floristas' are saving their money in two separate boxes – one box for individual loans and the other for the craft group. With the craft group's money, they plan to improve their workshop and open a guest house.



A member of the 'Floristas' works on a necklace. Prior to the group's formation, the members did not make much profit and had to supplement their income by selling squid and firewood that they collected at the beach. Now, they are able to concentrate on making crafts. With their profits, members have been able to pay school fees and buy books.

A silversmith in Ibo works on a new piece of jewellery. In Cabo Delgado, skills are passed down through generations, and most artisanal work is learned through apprenticeship. Apprentices in sculpting, silversmithing, and basket-weaving can take months, or even years, to perfect their craft. ♦