



# IMPACTS REPORT 2020

AKOJO  
MARKET

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## WHO WE ARE

AKOJO MARKET is the leading UK platform selling handmade accessories, jewellery, homeware and fashion from independent African designers. We carefully select talented designers and brands who promote local culture and artisan craftsmanship and are committed to a sustainable and transparent way of working.





## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to be an inclusive, curated global marketplace, elevating and promoting brands that have a positive impact on their local communities and the local environment. We bring together changemakers, thought leaders and industry pioneers on our

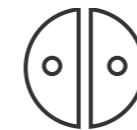
collective journey of discovery and responsible consumption.

Our platform charges a brand joiner fee, takes commission on sales and offers free guidance to brands. We reinvest all profits into the business.

## OUR VALUES



**TRANSPARENCY**  
Openness in how we work together



**EQUALITY**  
Equal opportunity and equal representation



**RESPECT**  
Approach each conversation with care



**PRESERVATION**  
Working towards a more sustainable and fairer society globally

# OUR 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

## CARBON NEUTRAL

We worked with Nula Carbon to calculate our carbon footprint and offset all 2019-2020 emissions from our international and UK deliveries. We purchase carbon credits that provide a source of income – through job creation and investment in local businesses - for landowners and local communities in Kenya. This enables particularly youth to protect their local forests rather than being forced to chop down

trees for money. This is a more sustainable approach than planting trees, which simultaneously protects livelihoods, local habitats and the welfare of the planet, resonating deeply with our mission. We calculated that our annual carbon emissions were 8267 KGCO<sub>2</sub>e, and we added 15% onto our estimates to account for any errors or additional emissions unknown to us.



Image: Nula Carbon, photo: Hattice Schmidt

## DESIGNERS

We increased the number of brands on our platform to 43. In addition to our strict criteria for working with brands, we set ourselves a goal of bringing on board more female-founded, black-owned brands.

In 2020, 100% of part-time staff employed by AKOJO MARKET were black and Middle Eastern.

Our brands are over 90% female, 30% black-owned.

Our board is 75% female, 25% black.

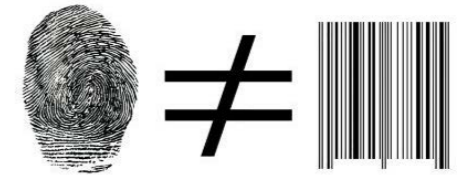
Our brands collectively empower and contribute to the financial independence and skills training of over 2,500 mostly female artisans in Africa.

## DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

As white British and British / Zimbabwean founders, we have been on a profound journey of learning and deepening our understanding of racial inequality, cultural appropriation and representation. We have taken the time to stop, learn, listen and take action.

## CHARITY DONATIONS

We donated to the OR Foundation's campaign to support the Kantamanto community, living and working amongst the ruins of a devastating fire at the already polluting second hand-clothing market. During BLM, we supported Platform LDN and donated to BLM.



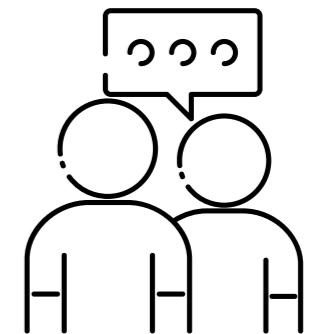
## PACKAGING

All of our packaging is plastic free. We only use 100% recycled or recyclable packaging which is FSC Certified and our tissue paper is acid free. This relates to AKOJO MARKET packaging for U.K. nationwide deliveries.



## TRAINING & GUIDANCE

AKOJO MARKET gave free guidance to brands who needed more support with their operations or ethics and compliance, and we delivered one on one training.



# OUR 2021 TARGETS

1. To have long lasting, deep impact by fostering even closer relations with our brands. We will cap our brands in 2021 to 50.
2. Eliminate single use plastic from packaging – work with DHL to find a solution for international deliveries.
3. Work with our brands to increase female artisans across all 50 supply chains.
4. Work with our brands to reduce water usage across the supply chain, decrease use of chemical dyes and source raw materials more locally, by providing training.



Image: Organic Savanna

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

AKOJO MARKET's 2020 Impacts Report is about tracking real impact on human lives and livelihoods, preservation of traditional craft and minimising harm on the environment, in line with our specific mission. It is not about looking good, but rather good business.

Transparency, monitoring and setting targets for improvement are the only ways that we will together achieve the outcomes our planet and humanity needs to survive pandemics, climate change, and reverse deep inequalities globally.

“We’ve shared our brands’ incredible efforts to hire locally, hire female artisans, pay fair and good wages, offer skills training, provide additional support for communities in need (especially during Covid-19) and introduce pioneering methods of sustainable production.”

## BRANDS REPORTS

AKOJO MARKET proudly had a total of 43 brands on the marketplace throughout 2020. Across each of these 43 supply chains, over 2,500 artisans were involved (and remunerated) in the process of making our brands products. Based on Africa-centric statistics of each artisan/employee having approximately 4.5 dependents, 11,250 people were positively impacted by our brands’ work and trade, excluding recipients of any charitable activities. This was in spite of a global pandemic, which brought many workshops and facilities to a close, as well as reduced demand.

The remainder of this report summarises our brands’ incredible efforts to hire locally, hire female artisans, pay fair and good wages, offer skills training, provide additional support for communities in need (especially during Covid-19) and introduce pioneering methods of sustainable production. These are

criteria set by AKOJO MARKET to evaluate each brands’ specific impacts. The extent to which AKOJO MARKET contributed to each of our brands’ excellent work, through increased sales, training, awareness and one on one support varies per brand and is unfortunately too much of an “intangible” to calculate numerically at this point. Measuring this more accurately is a priority for our 2021 Impacts Report (published March 2022). Brands new to AKOJO MARKET in 2021 will be included in the 2021 report.

35,396 users visited AKOJO MARKET over 2020, and hundreds of customers (generating over £35,000 in sales) made a conscious decision to shop sustainably on our site. We also measure our impacts by the “impactful products” we are bringing to the lives of people around the world, telling the story of the maker and converting shoppers into consumers of this important customer segment.



“We now use REPREVE® fabric (82% recycled plastic), so almost our entire collection will be made from recycled plastic soon.” - Gabrielle Swimwear

## SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Recycling and upcycling has become central to many of our brands. We have seen a sharp increase in the inventive use of offcuts, by-products sourced locally, and upcycled fabrics either purchased or from old collections.

New ground-breaking materials are being introduced - including the likes of REPREVE® Lycra and bio-acetate for sunglasses.

We have witnessed an increase in outsourcing, rather than building integrated supply chains, in a bid to help brands find more innovative, sustainable fabrics and manufacturing solutions. This demonstrates growing capabilities within their region and market and it offers scope to navigate/pivot during a pandemic. However, it is also a product of not having enough income to build up expertise or

personnel in-house. This can mean less skills training, fixed contracts and career progression for makers.

The vast majority of our brands are working on entirely eradicating plastic from packaging - even though this can be difficult when using DHL, FEDEX, UPS and other international logistics providers. Solutions include organic cotton and hemp dust bags, biodegradable tissue paper, carton packaging and compostable mailers.

In addition, a great many of our brands offset their carbon footprint, in addition to AKOJO MARKET, and use certified neutral carbon printing companies.

Applications increased for B Corp - two of our brands achieved B Corp status.



“Our recycled brass jewellery is made in a solar powered workshop and our Blantyre Jars are created from recycled wine bottles collected from hotels and restaurants.”

- Qäsa Qäsa

“I use upcycled materials only. Planning to plant a tree in Africa per sold item.”

- Emeka Suits



“We updated and upgraded some of our packaging from plastic bottles to glass bottles for our Luxe oils. We created a RE-FILL and REUSE scheme with refill packs for our haircare products to encourage reusing and recycling old bottles.”

- Luxemore



“We have reworked our packaging to remove all non recyclable items.”

- Meraki Jewellery Design



PET filling for the toys: “Buying new Dacron off cuts from upholsterers is a very good way of using something that would otherwise with thrown away; and is more cost effective than new.”

- Toy Project



“We launched the initiative to offset our carbon footprint by planting indigenous fruit trees in Goma, DRC. This supports another project where the youth are training in horticulture to care for these trees in addition to offsetting CO2 emissions.”

- Kisany

“We changed our packaging in September to completely eliminate plastic. Partnered with three UK suppliers to create packaging featuring FSC-certified materials, vegetable based inks, compostable wool felt and wood from FSC certified, fast-growing tree varieties. We also introduced a packaging information leaflet with instructions explaining how to dispose of each packaging item responsibly.”



- Yala Jewellery

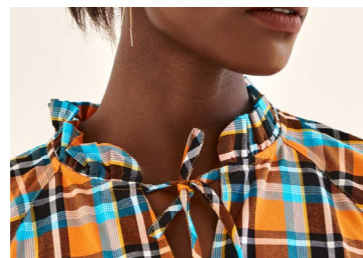
“In line with our effort to create sustainable fashion, we are moving away from labelling our collections by season or year.”

- Moto Moto



“Our new t-shirts can be sent back to us when worn out and recycled into new yarns so it’s fully circular.”

- Free As a Human



“I am creating Tote Bags out of leftovers from cutting.”

- Buki Akomolafe



“From sisal and bolga straw to organic cotton and sweetgrass, natural fibers account for roughly 96% of raw materials used in Indego Africa’s product line in 2020.”

## USE OF RAW MATERIALS & LOCALLY SOURCED

“We are working on sustainable plant dyeing, using local Zambian plants.”

- Raw Label

Throughout 2020 our designers continued (even more) to employ local techniques and use local raw materials. We have seen a dramatic increase in the use of sisal, straw, and local fibres. We have also seen an increase in the use of natural dyes, including vegetable and plant dyes for all collections.



“Sustainable straw is still our main material.”

- Lola & Mawu



“Our textiles are made from 100% natural Ethiopian cotton and eri-silk. Parts of the thread blend in our eri-silk throw are dyed using natural pomegranate husks, which give an earthy grey colour.”

- Qäsa Qäsa



“Both factories hardly worked with cotton prior to our business. They had the knowledge, but synthetic fibers have always been the bulk of their business. Due to the crash of a few large local retailers who generated this demand, smaller and more sustainable businesses rose with a greater demand for natural, sustainable fibers. One factory made a strategic decision to move away from synthetic fibers entirely by mid 2021.”

- Romaria and Something Good Studio



“We are trialing clog heels and espadrilles using local wood and hyacinth rope.”

- Shekudo



“We have surprisingly been able to sustain the same amount of full time artisans pre pandemic, and have taken on some contract artisans when needed for PPE projects we had during the thick of the pandemic.”

- Eclectic Chique

## PAY & EMPLOYMENT

Our brands were unanimous in their approach to pay in 2020. Overall, the number of individuals our brands worked with in 2020 increased, although some reported on having to reduce headcount or less outsourcing of work due to reduced demand. Nevertheless, the amount of pay exceeded minimum wage in all cases, and in some instances, pay was

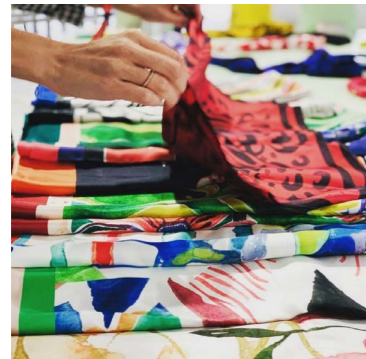
increased. The minimum wage differs per country, and in some countries such as DRC and SA is subject to frequent change.

“I have provided consistent work for my artisans over the year of 2020 even if everyone was working from home during lock down.”

- Hamaji

“Since lockdown, we have added artisans to our staff and increased from 11 to 16. We provide our team with the opportunity to work overtime whenever they like, which we pay at 1.5x normal rate.”

- Mia Mélange



“I have increased those on full time employment rather than contract work.”

- Mantua



“We often pay 20-40% more per item to artisans working on a contract basis”.

- Shekudo

AKOJO MARKET partnered with MADE51, a platform by UNHCR, to sell refugee-made Christmas ornaments by refugees in six camps across Africa. “When refugees flee, they carry with them the traditions, skills, knowledge and craftsmanship. MADE51 creates a way to sustain artistic traditions, preserve culture and participate in the global economy.”

- MADE51



“We’ve paid for 6 female apprentices to learn to weave.” - Boon & Up

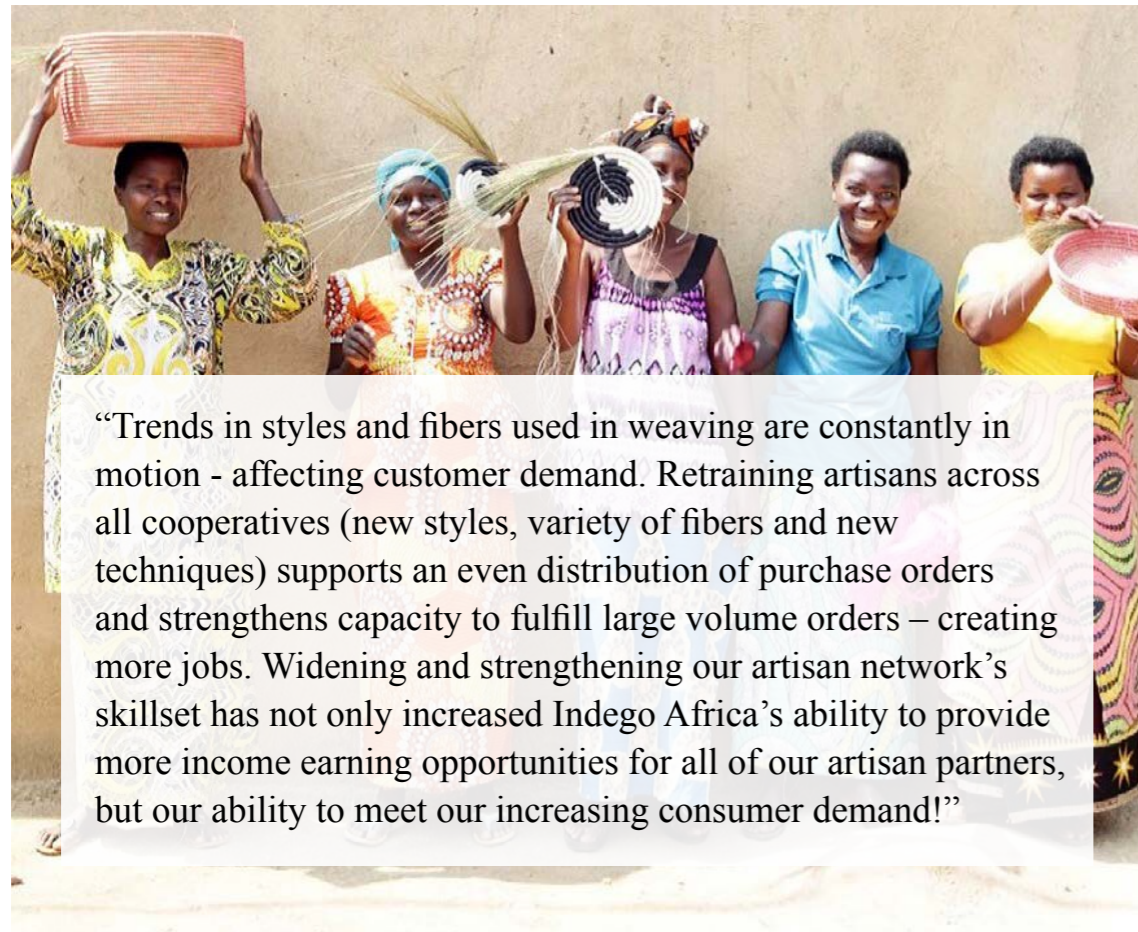
## TRAINING

Key Trends across 2020.

Partly owing to difficulties recruiting and partly to reward staff loyalty, there has been considerable internal upskilling and promotions to senior positions for junior staff members.

Training largely couldn’t happen

for many of our brands, partly budgetary considerations and mostly logistical (bringing people together not possible), but seeds have been sown for future interactions, particularly connecting with women makers through technology and conducting remote training. This is a long term beneficial shift.



“Trends in styles and fibers used in weaving are constantly in motion - affecting customer demand. Retraining artisans across all cooperatives (new styles, variety of fibers and new techniques) supports an even distribution of purchase orders and strengthens capacity to fulfill large volume orders – creating more jobs. Widening and strengthening our artisan network’s skillset has not only increased Indego Africa’s ability to provide more income earning opportunities for all of our artisan partners, but our ability to meet our increasing consumer demand!”

In December 2020, Indego Africa launched an Artisan Advancement Program designed to further build on Indego Africa’s vocational training programmes - helping strengthen the capacity of artisan women to successfully scale their enterprises.

Taught onsite to 4 cooperatives per semester, the program’s end goals are threefold:

1. Workshop & Sustainability Certification: Dyeing consistency and techniques
2. Improved access to capital and knowledge of Savings & Credit Unions
3. Business Plans for 2020-2021 to achieve cooperative specific goals

“We have provided smart phones to 2 of the regular suppliers that we work with to aid in communication.”

- Raw Label



“4 women were trained up into how to weave with plastic. There is a programme in place with the NGO we work with (CARE-4basket) that visits schools and shows the students the techniques so that others may one day become weavers themselves.”

- Pala Eyewear

“We work directly with our Makonde artisans to create our own designs. Every year we entrust them with innovative new designs which challenges their traditional carving skill set but fosters their own growth.”

- Qāsa Qāsa

“Weekly facilitation of socially distanced computer learning hubs for on average 30 local youth (during 2nd half of 2020).”

- Organic Savanna



“Fabric and sales training for staff.”

- Ardmore Design



“We provide training and skills building for the women groups in Mali and Gambia (their work does not form part of our supply chain, these are separate initiatives to give back to these communities). This includes improvement on social mobility, financial freedom and access to better health/sanitation.”

- Origin Africa



## CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

“I have donated many blanket samples to the less fortunate, and introduced the online prints section where we donate all profits to a handful of local charities that I believe in. Also, I have donated off-cuts to other artisans to create new products to sell under their own umbrellas. The value of money and goods donated in 2020 totals to approx. R45 000.00. This excludes the artists and makers who all benefit from the business.”

- Something Good Studio

“Our proceeds go to Love Support Unite in Malawi, which supported the medical outreach programme that reached 38,925 people in 2019-20. It has continued to treat people in rural areas. Early childhood development and adult literacy resumed again last month but are now facing temporary closure to meet restrictions.”

- Love Specs



“For the first time we created a special campaign for the conservation of the African Rhino. We offered a conservation candle to our customers with 50% of profits going to rhino conservation. We were pleased that this November campaign was a success and we were able to give a \$5,000 donation to Lewa Conservancy.”

- Organic Savanna

“We donate 100% of our profits to social impact initiatives in Africa. In 2020 we funded over £19,000 worth of social impact work.”

- Origin Africa



OUR BRANDS SUPPORTED THESE ORGANISATIONS:



SEAWATCH, conducts civil search & rescue operations in the Central Med.



MADE51, brought to life by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency

N2M  
No 2 Malaria



N2M, 'one bracelet for one net' initiative.



HAART Kenya, for survivors of trafficking.



TEAM PANKAJ, a community group delivering food packages to vulnerable families in Nairobi.



THE FURSA TRUST, offers educational and mentoring opportunities to children in the slums of Nairobi.



FARAJA CANCER SUPPORT TRUST, Kenya



SAARTJIE BAARTMAN FOUNDATION, women's shelter in Cape Town.



Vision Aid Overseas

VISION AID OVERSEAS, access to affordable eye care services and glasses.



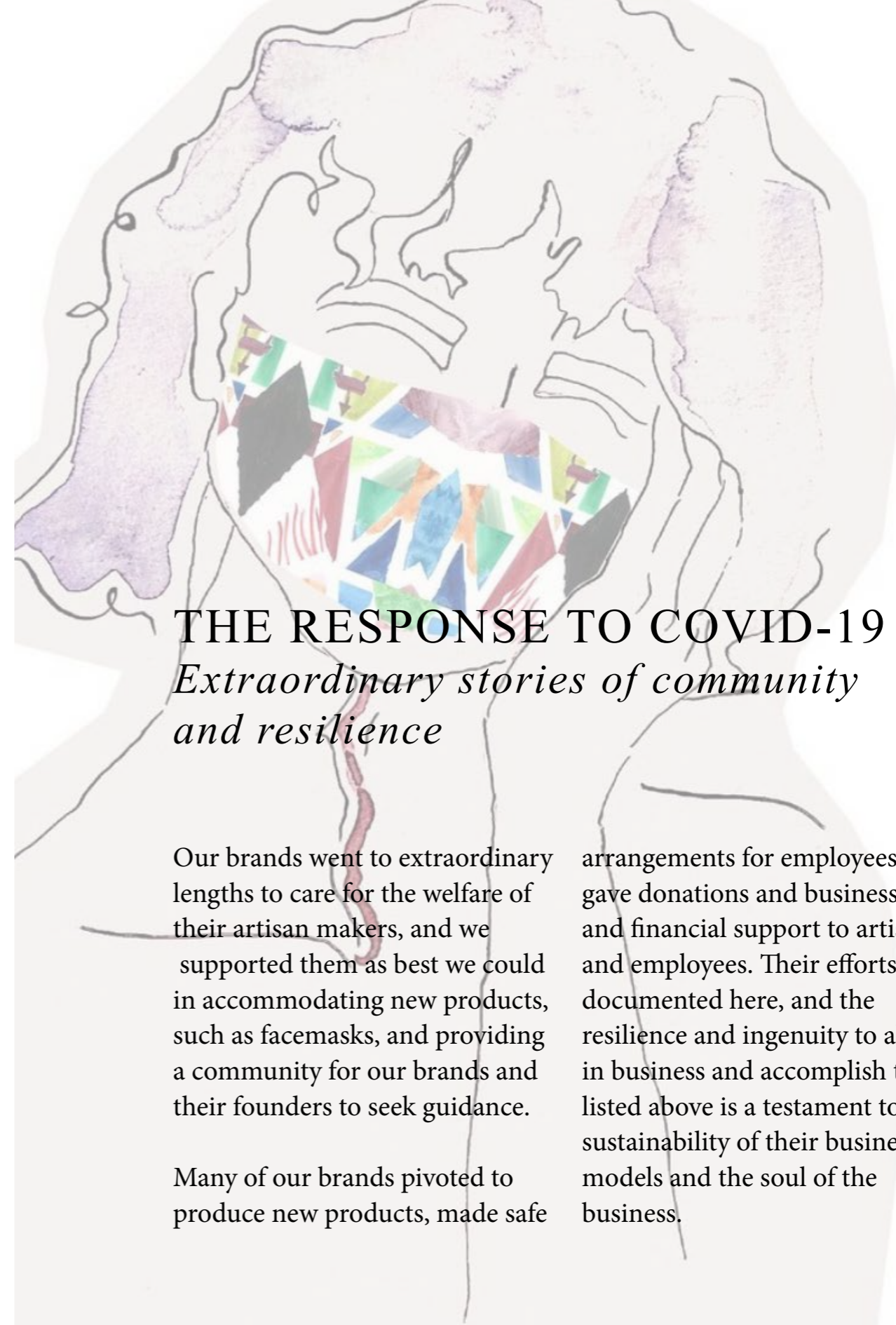
LOVE SUPPORT UNITE, empowers people to become self sufficient through integrated community-based projects.



BEIT EL BARAKA, to aid with the relief of the Beirut blast.



FREE AS A HUMAN FOUNDATION, supporting education of young girls and women through scholarships and paid school fees.



## THE RESPONSE TO COVID-19

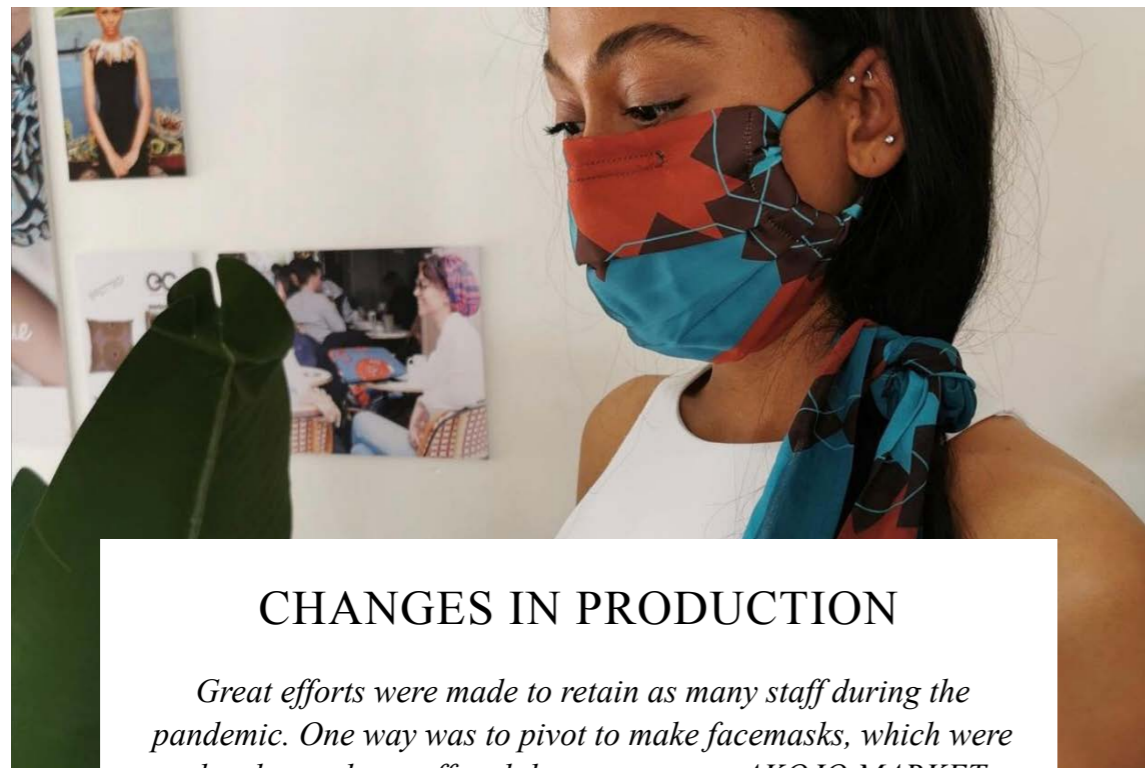
*Extraordinary stories of community and resilience*

Our brands went to extraordinary lengths to care for the welfare of their artisan makers, and we supported them as best we could in accommodating new products, such as facemasks, and providing a community for our brands and their founders to seek guidance.

Many of our brands pivoted to produce new products, made safe

arrangements for employees, gave donations and business and financial support to artisans and employees. Their efforts are documented here, and the resilience and ingenuity to all stay in business and accomplish that listed above is a testament to the sustainability of their business models and the soul of the business.





## CHANGES IN PRODUCTION

*Great efforts were made to retain as many staff during the pandemic. One way was to pivot to make facemasks, which were also donated to staff and the government. AKOJO MARKET secured multiple press features, including in Vogue, for our brands' facemasks to boost sales.*

“During 2020 our seamstress was encouraged to take cut off fabric home to sew silk face masks. These face masks were sold via social media and after postage has been covered all monies went to her as extra income.”

- Mantua

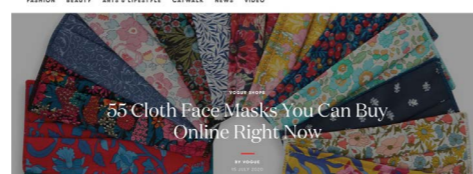
“We have been able to secure all jobs (10 jobs) in spite of COVID. 8 female artisans, 2 general male workers. Livingstone is the travel hub in Zambia and we have been hit hard. In order to keep jobs we have been making fish nets for a local fish farm and cloth masks for the Zambian Ministry of Health.”

- Wayawaya

“Proceeds from sales of masks have been donated to the Midlands Food Bank - whom had fed many people who lost their work due to the pandemic.”

- Ardmore Design

## VOGUE



## SAFE ARRANGEMENTS FOR EMPLOYEES

“In 2020 we were able to offer safe sanitised accommodation to our artisans during the lockdown, as we had PPE projects we needed to fulfil. This was a major turning point for us all at EC. The team spirit and can do attitude to work under such different constraints and still get the job done correctly was extremely remarkable and one we would never forget. With this new normal and several masks later, It was evident we still needed to pivot the business in order to survive. In September 2020, we began tweaking our business model and widened our range by creating for the first time ever lounge wear kaftans. This new collection not only kept our artisans busy, but also challenged them to think out of the box and be innovative, true growth has been achieved on all fronts when we look back at where we were in September to now.”

- Eclectic Chique

“During the first lock down in South Africa we quickly pivoted and began making fabric face masks. We managed to supply most of our team with the necessary supplies and machinery to make them from home and we then collected and distributed them from our studio. The team members that were not able to sew the face masks helped with the fabric preparations and packing of the thousands of orders! At a stage we were at full capacity and even managed to employ more people that had lost their jobs at the time.”

- Mia Mélange





**HYGIENE PRODUCTS & FOOD DONATIONS**

*Brands, and some who wish to remain anonymous, delivered hygiene products, mobile phones, food supplies and care packages.*

**“Monthly food distribution to 100 families in our surrounding community in Kenya.”**

**- Organic Savanna**

In addition to supplying regular food packages to the local community Organic Savanna built 3 community handwashing stations; organised the distribution of new sports shoes to 500 women, youth and children in partnership with Adidas and purchased school supplies and school uniforms for 100 local children.

**“Distributed care packs including soap, sanitary products, stationary for students.”**

“We distributed care packs including soap, sanitary products, stationary for students - in collaboration with NGO BoMake Rural Projects. We brought food hampers for the weavers STUDIO TEAM SUPPORT. We have also given the team and their families face masks We have given food hampers to staff members who were not in work We also brought vegetable seedlings for team members with gardens three times in the past year, so they have been able to develop their home farms for their families and small business income.”

**- Khokho Collection**

“Our focus this year was on providing covid guidance and support such as. delivery of hygiene products.”

**- Lola & Mawu**

“During 2020, Moto Moto continued the support of daily school meals for Bignet Education Centre. Due to the COVID-19 situation, many parents lost their jobs and as a result daily school meals became even more important as they often are the only meal. These school meals were funded via the One Love. One Tribe. collection and via direct donations from Moto Moto friends, family and fans.”

**- Moto Moto**



“A bonus at the end of the year was offered as a COVID financial aid across the two ateliers.”

- KISANY

## BONUSES & FINANCIAL SUPPORT

“Payment of school fees for 100 local children upon reopening of local schools.”

- Organic Savanna

“During COVID-19 lockdown periods in Rwanda and Ghana, our artisan partners were unable to leave their homes to work in their cooperatives. As a result, they earned zero income for almost eight weeks. In response, Indego Africa launched an Artisan Livelihood Protection Fund (ALPF) to raise capital to fund orders for our artisan partner’s handmade products. The impact of the ALPF has resulted in more than 800 artisans in 26 cooperatives being able to work, 3,986 units produced, and \$50,874 in artisan income generated.”

- Indego Africa

# 2021 BRAND TARGETS

“Our vision for 2021 is to grow the company by creating awareness of the luxurious durability of silk. This would enable us to employ more seamstresses and thereby we can help provide for more families.”

- Mantua

1. Generating enough work to employ local makers.
2. Female empowerment and financial independence for women.
3. Sustainable production.

“As of March [2021] we’ll be hiking the rate by another 30% for a selected group of 8 weavers as they undertake more specialised work.”

- Boon & Up

“2021 and 2022 are the years set by our brands to entirely eliminating plastic from packaging.”

- Shekudo

“Our goal is to employ and train younger women. Most of our artisans are women in their 50s and Grandmothers. The plan was to recruit 3 young women artisans in the summer of 2020 but I felt it was too risky to Congo for a month in the middle of the pandemic.”

- Duarra

With thanks to:

DESIGNERS

Affandjam  
Ardmore Design  
Asha : Eleven  
Bakwai  
Bibi & Me  
Boon & Up  
Buki Akomolafe  
Duarra  
Eclectic Chique  
Emeka Suits  
Flickerwick  
Free As A Human  
Gabrielle Swimwear  
Hamaji  
Indego Africa  
Khokho Collection  
Kimberley Gundle  
KISANY Living Linens  
LÄLLA  
Lilabare  
Lola & Mawu  
Love Specs  
Lunar  
Luxemore London  
MADE51  
Mantua  
Meraki Jewellery Design  
Merwe Salt  
Mia Mélange  
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