

# Mayan Hands

Annual Report  
2021-2022



Dear Friends,

We share this annual report with an abundance of gratitude. Another year into the pandemic, we face new challenges like rising costs, shutdowns, and shortages of raw materials. Miraculously we continue to thrive, buoyed by Mayan Hands' amazing network of supporters.

We are inspired each day by the women of Mayan Hands. The obstacles they face are daunting: extreme poverty that drives migration, climate change that contributes to food insecurity, racism that severely limits even the most basic of opportunities, including education and access to health care. Yet our artisan partners persevere and craft solutions through their creative endeavors.

For more than thirty years, Mayan Hands has partnered with Mayan women in their journey to self-reliance and prosperity. We have seen the transformative power of economic and educational opportunities in the lives of Mayan women and their families. When women have income, they put food on their families' tables, send their children to school, invest in their local communities and work for a better future. When girls go to school, they have agency to break the cycle of poverty for themselves and future generations.

Equally important, our mission includes bringing the beautiful work of Mayan women to the world so they can be recognized as creative individuals whose lives and work deserve respect. This is crucial given the harsh context of racism and discrimination they suffer in the society in which they live. They are the pillars sustaining their culture and bringing it into the future.

None of this is possible without the community that shares our journey. This support allowed us to dream big and co-create an exciting new strategic plan which envisions an expanded and more inclusive future of our organization. We look ahead with optimism and joy!

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anne Kelly  
Executive Director



Mayan Hands artisan partners craft sustainable futures as they preserve the culture they cherish.

# Mission

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Mayan Hands is a fair-trade nonprofit dedicated to providing economic and educational opportunities to Mayan women and girls, so that they can build sustainable futures for themselves, their families and communities, as they continue to live within the culture they cherish.



When women earn income, their families thrive, communities benefit, and economies grow.

# We Believe

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We believe women are powerful agents for social and economic change in developing countries. When women work, their families thrive, their communities benefit, and economies grow. With access to resources and tools, women are able to achieve their full potential and ensure the same for those around them.

We believe people can overcome disadvantage and marginalization if they are able to take more control over their work and their lives, if they are better organized, resourced and supported, and can secure access to mainstream markets under fair trading conditions.

We believe the work of the human hand contributes to a deeper understanding of our shared humanity. As artisans revive and preserve timeless cultural traditions and sustain local economies, they are directly connected to consumers through authentic handmade objects that carry beauty and convey meaning.



With access to opportunities, women are able to realize their full potential and ensure the same for those around them.

# How We Work

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## Market Access

Access to global markets provides women with opportunities to earn critical income.



## Capacity Building

Artisans participate in trainings to develop business, technical, and leadership skills.



## Education

Mayan Hands invests in the next generation by providing scholarships and support to indigenous girls.

*We believe that when provided with economic and educational opportunity, women and girls can realize their potential and have a dignified path out of poverty.*



# Market Access





# Market Access

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Selling their beautiful handcrafted creations, month after month and year after year, has provided critical and reliable income to our artisan partners. Our long-term partnership provides financial stability and gives the women more agency so they can plan for the future and have more control over their lives.

Since our inception, Mayan Hands has followed fair trade principles, which include fair compensation, safe working conditions, ensuring the rights of children, environmental sustainability and respect of cultural identity. We are proud to be a founding member of the [Fair Trade Federation](#).



## Artisan Spotlight

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*Weaver Macaria Quisquina Mendoza, who weaves on the backstrap loom, reflects on her time working with Mayan Hands:*

I've been working with Mayan Hands for more than 30 years now. I have no husband or children. I never went to school, not a day in my life. I couldn't go to school because my parents wouldn't allow it. They believed that girls didn't need to go to school and besides they didn't have money to buy me any school supplies.

We women got organized after the armed conflict. For many years, women wouldn't dare leave their communities. But when I heard there was a group of women who were getting together, I went to see what it was about. After realizing it was a group of women weavers, I decided to join, although it was hard to get together.

Before working with Mayan Hands, I used to go to Sololá where people from stores there would give me orders to weave. I would weave at home and take the products back, but I didn't earn much money at all.

Our products are not just simply products, but represent great effort behind each one. Weaving the things that I make for Mayan Hands gives me great satisfaction and also gives us all the resources we need to live. We always welcome new ideas and new opportunities for work.

We have the support we need to participate in different programs and get ahead. I use my earnings to plant potatoes to sell and I have a small store in my house, which is near my niece's home.

*“Each one of us has something great to do. Each one of us does her best.”*

Because Mayan Hands is for all the women, we are like a family. We feel involved. I am very happy to work with the other women in the cooperative and to be part of the Mayan Hands team. Each one of us has something great to do. Each one of us does her best.

We have seen great changes. Now we are a group of women with the opportunity to work together, to be joined, to talk and express ourselves. We are grateful for all these changes.



*Macaria weaving on the backstrap loom.*



# Capacity Building



# Capacity Building

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In addition to paying fair wages for their work, programs that support our artisan partners in realizing their potential as artists, businesswomen, and leaders in their communities help them create lasting change at home, and allow the women to share their creativity and culture with the global community.

Our artisan partners participate in capacity-building programs that offer technical assistance, new skills or technique development, product design, business and leadership development, and occupational health and safety, as well as workshops in gender role awareness, conflict resolution, and health and wellbeing.



Business Skills



Leadership



Health &  
Well-Being



Technical Skills  
& Design



Occupational  
Health & Safety



Educating girls can break  
the cycle of poverty in one  
generation.



# Education

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Their children's education is the highest priority of our artisan partners. Unfortunately, in Guatemala, girls face barriers to the quality education they deserve simply because they are girls. Cultural bias, poverty, hunger, violence, and early or forced marriage are a daily reality. Mayan Hands invests in the next generation of women leaders by offering scholarships and support to the daughters of our artisan partners.

Educating girls can break the cycle of poverty in one generation. Educated girls are healthier, earn more, and stand up for their rights. With equal access to education and opportunities, girls can eventually grow into resilient women able to take on leadership roles and improve the social and economic well-being of their families, their communities, and their country.

Mayan Hands Education Fund provides scholarships to the daughters of our artisan partners to cover the cost of tuition, enrollment fees, uniforms, travel and school supplies. Mayan Hands scholarship recipients participate in programs to support students as they encounter the unique challenges of being first-generation Indigenous girls seeking an education.

## In Her Words

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Education for girls can transform communities, countries and our world. Educating girls is an investment in a healthier and more peaceful society, economic growth, and the future of our planet.

This year, 65 students attended school with the support of Mayan Hands scholarships. Even though the pandemic has exacerbated the inequalities that create barriers to girls' education, the students' families remain committed to their daughters' education. The students, including 9 at the university, navigated the challenges of transitioning from in-person education to remote learning.



*I am grateful for the immense help this scholarship represents. Not just the financial compensation, which of course has been very helpful, but also for all your efforts to provide a better future to women who struggle every day. Thank you for your belief that women can live a dignified life. – María Eufemia*

*I love my courses in the field of human services and am learning methodologies to make a difference in the lives of communities, families, and individuals who are the most vulnerable. – Juana Herlinda*

*I am the first person in my family to attend college and I feel extremely honored and happy to be a scholarship recipient. Without this support I don't know how I could do it. In life there are always difficulties and one of them is taking classes online. But thanks to the support we receive, we can be resilient and do whatever we set out to do. - Evelyn Yulissa*

*Studying and having a family has been a difficult process for me, a lot of responsibility. It's my first year in college and I am very motivated to continue my university studies so I can give my daughter a better life. – Aracely Catalina*

*I had wanted to study business administration, but I changed my mind during the pandemic when I saw so many people getting sick and dying. Now I am studying to be a lab technician and will continue on to get a master's degree in biochemistry. I want to go far and demonstrate that we women can also be professionals. I get angry when people tell me that I just need to find a husband and start a family. I want to be an independent and successful woman! - Josefa*



# Looking Ahead

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Over the last year, Mayan Hands engaged in a collaborative strategic planning process, carefully examining our strengths and challenges, dreaming of possibilities, and identifying priorities to advance our mission, including:

## *Capacity Building*

- Develop new products and designs to ensure full and consistent employment for all artisan cooperatives.
- Incorporate new cooperatives into Mayan Hands in order to benefit more artisans and meet the existing demand for popular products.
- Train master artisans in teaching skills so they can support artisans in their own cooperatives and train women in new coops.
- Design and implement programs to address artisan needs related to their work with Mayan Hands, including but not limited to occupational health and safety, financial literacy, and new skill development.

## *Artisan Agency*

Engage our artisan partners so that we offer programs that benefit them according to the needs they identify. Furthermore, increase artisan participation in Mayan Hands' organizational decisions.

- Support and strengthen artisan cooperative structure with programs to develop leadership skills, cooperative decision-making, efficient operation, and implementation of fair-trade principles.
- Develop formal channels for artisan involvement in organizational decisions.
- Analyze and increase compensation and benefits for our artisan partners.

## *Artisan Well-Being*

Create strategies to address the critical lack of Mayan women's access to health and educational resources in their communities.

- Identify physical and emotional health needs of our artisan partners through direct consultation with the women.
- Map community resources available in the communities where our artisan partners live.
- Establish plans and programs to promote physical and emotional well-being, recognizing particular challenges that our artisan partners endure by virtue of being Mayan women in a society where they experience marginalization due to their race and gender.
- Collaborate with the daughters of our artisan partners to identify and address needs that will enhance their success in their pursuit of education and employment.

# thank you • gracias • matiox

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who accompanied us this year on this journey of creating opportunity and hope.

## Artisan Partners

You inspire us each day with your dedication to your families and communities, your enormous talent, and your perseverance in the face of so many obstacles. We are honored to work by your side.

## Donors

Your generosity changes lives by helping to lift families out of poverty through programs that empower and educate. Thank you for your support.

## Wholesale and Retail Customers

We appreciate your commitment to putting people before profits by purchasing Mayan Hands products. Your collaboration is integral to our success.

## Volunteers

Thank you for countless hours of service at our warehouse, in stores, churches, weaving guilds and at other events around the country.

## Fair Trade Allies

We are grateful to the collaborative network of fair traders who educate, inspire, and support us.

## Board of Directors and Staff

Thank you for the passion, dedication, and skill you contribute to our work together.



## Mayan Hands Foundation Board of Directors

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Mark Van Wormer

Thank you to our artisan partners who consented to having their images included in this report.

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