



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

GUATEMALA

BEFORE & AFTER From Rubbish to Radiance

Artisans turn bottles into high-end handcrafted collectible art

The story of tranSglass™ proves that if the right designers, marketers, product developers, exporters, and artisans come together, a line of high-end handcrafted products can be born and reach global luxury markets in just over a year. The protagonist of tranSglass™ is the Guatemalan artisan group, [La Casa Cotzal](#). Led by Ian González, the group collects donated recycled bottles and transforms them into collectible art pieces. They are literally turning garbage into works of superior craftsmanship and design. USAID supported this concept-to-market process with studies on work space organization, warehousing, inventory management, production techniques, and training in skills that enable the artisans to meet client specifications while maximizing production. Prior to this initiative, the 22 Guatemalan artisans who make the pieces were either unemployed or working as laborers. Now they have learned a craft and take great pride in their ability to work together to cut, shape, and polish the recycled bottles.

Telling Our Story

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Photo: USAID/Wende DuFion

BEFORE Wine, champagne, and beer bottles that are considered rubbish by most are thrown out at restaurants and residences in upscale neighborhoods in Guatemala City. A small team of artisans collects these bottles and transforms them into works of art. Before they met these bottles, these artisans were either unemployed or scraping a living as day laborers.



Photos: La Casa Cotzallan González, Artecnic/Angela Moore

AFTER Artisans trained by USAID and its partners produce an assorted collection of glassware designs in green, clear, blue, or brown polished or satin glass. Because each one is handcrafted, each piece is unique — with slight variations in size, color, and appearance. The vases, tumblers, and carafes are packed into a special box, also produced by Guatemalan hands, and then marketed and sold globally to distributors by a group called Artecnic. The objects produced are so beautiful that Time Magazine featured them on the cover of its Winter 2005 Style supplement and the Museum of Modern Art store carries them.