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KENYA

CASE STUDY

A Small Business Makes Gains

International exposure brings benefits to a small firm and its employees



Photo: Finn Holm-Olsen, ECA Trade Hub

With an employee bonus from Kenana Knitters, Margaret Wanjiku was able to buy furniture for her home and clothes for her children.

“I am happy to work here, especially because I am a single mother,” says Margaret. “With this job I am now able to cope on my own.”

Challenge

Kenana Knitters used to be a small firm, producing just enough home and gift woolens to support its 80 employees. Located in Nakuru, Kenya, the company had been struggling to strengthen its product line and begin exporting, but without the right information about marketing and export design, Kenana Knitters just couldn't break through.

Initiative

USAID sponsored Kenana Knitters' participation in the May 2004 and 2005 Sources Shows in New York, a venue that greatly boosted Kenana's visibility. Before the show, company representatives met with USAID consultants, who advised them on design, production and marketing — important issues they were able to incorporate into their presentations that improved their products.

Results

After returning from the 2004 show, Kenana Knitters had to triple its workforce to meet the unprecedented increase in overseas demand — more than \$260,000 in orders within five months. The company has diversified its customer base to include Japan, Canada and Italy. But along with its sales, Kenana Knitters has also increased the services it gives its employees. A self-run clinic at the factory offers monthly HIV/AIDS counseling and testing and family planning services for employees, and the company recently purchased two second-hand computers to upgrade employee skills. Margaret Wanjiku, a single mother of five and a recent beneficiary of an employee bonus says, “I am happy to work here, especially because I am a single mother. With this job I am now able to cope on my own.” Because of her bonus, Margaret was able to purchase clothes for her children and new furniture for their home.

Telling Our Story

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