

2,500 Kenyan fashion creators poised to enter global markets

As a flagship programme of the International Trade Centre (ITC), the Ethical Fashion Initiative's (EFI) business model has 15 years of success in bringing sustainable, quality fashion products onto the global stage.



Project beneficiaries, Satubo Women Self-Help Group at the EFI launch event at the Don Bosco Training Centre. In 2007, the women of Satubo (referring to Samburu, Turkana and Borana ethnic groups) came together with a mission to promote peace through beadwork. What started as a community-building initiative has flourished into a thriving enterprise, thanks to solid investments and support from EFI. Today, with over 60 women of all ages, Satubo has transformed into a shareholder company this year. Photo by ITC

The programme encourages circular design and production, so that creators make durable, reusable products with the goal of generating zero waste.

Some 2,500 people from marginalised communities throughout Kenya are expected to receive specialised training, improved working conditions and increased access to the market, with prominent international fashion firms.

EFI launched the new three-year project on 17 April with the Embassy of Italy in Kenya and the Nairobi office of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS). The Italian Government is funding the project to foster sustainable fashion production and job creation in Kenya.

The launch took place at the project's main incubation hub, the Don Bosco Training Centre in Nairobi. The event was attended by:

- Susan Mang'eni, principal secretary in the State Department of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Development
- Mercy Wanjau, secretary to the Cabinet of the Republic of Kenya
- Roberto Natali, ambassador of Italy
- Giovanni Grandi, head of the AICS Regional Office in Nairobi
- Stephen Jackson, the United Nations resident coordinator for Kenya
- Alex Musembi, co-founder of Africa Collect Textiles
- Lilian Kahiho, director of Ushinde

"By empowering artisans, micro-producers, and entrepreneurs, we aim to pave the way for inclusive and sustainable economic growth," said Grandi, head of AICS Nairobi.

"Employment and business creation stand as cornerstones of the Italian Cooperation's commitment in Kenya, and through this initiative, we aim at harnessing the potential offered by the incredible entrepreneurial drive of the Kenya population and of its young population."

"Kenyan artisans are already world-class creatives. What they sometimes still lack is access to the markets and systems at the international level that will allow them to take their production to the next level,' said Jackson. 'This ITC initiative will provide that, marrying local and international expertise for a win-win situation in the fast-moving world of global fashion."

Kenya's economic growth depends on working with small businesses, especially those employing women and youth, Mang'eni said. These efforts enable them to improve their competitiveness in domestic, regional and global trade, she added.

"I am delighted the EFI, which has a solid track record in supporting MSMEs from the fashion value chain, is launching this project in Kenya, creating new employment opportunities and shining a light on our homegrown creative and productive capacities," she said.

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