



Color Silk

Introduction



Location: Cambodia

Industry: Handmade Textiles

Founded in 2009

Image Credit to Color Silk

Color Silk is a social business that endeavors to prevent the ancient Cambodian tradition of silk weaving from vanishing, and to empower women in the more isolated areas of Cambodia to contribute to the economic development of their communities. Color Silk helps women in these communities to establish home-based enterprises that enables the women to work and live together close to their families, while at the same time be able to generate income and be economically independent.

Highlights

- May 2015, Vanntha NGORN founder of Color Silk (Cambodia) awarded from Cambodian Young Entrepreneur Awards 2015 “CYEA” as Outstanding Young Social Entrepreneur, which is organized by JCI Cambodia and Young Entrepreneurs Association of Cambodian.
- November 2015, Color Silk (Cambodia) won ASEAN Business Awards 2015 as AEC “Priority Integration Sector Excellence Award – Textiles” from ASEAN-BAC, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- In 2008, Color Silk was selected as a top ten prioritized plans in a business plan competition that was organized by McKinsey & Company with cooperation with the National University of Management (NUM) Phnom Penh, Cambodia



Mission

We work to preserve silk weaving culture that is at risk of vanishing, while reducing poverty and contributing to economic development in more isolated areas in Cambodia.

Social Problem

Color Silk was born in 2009 in the aftermaths of a financial crisis that affected the price of silk products. That economic breakdown forced many women to flee to neighboring countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia... to find a job. There, separated from their family, lacking of education, they often fell into dangerous situations such as human trafficking, sexual abuses or hard work conditions.

In the Cambodian culture, sons are more important than daughters, so most girls must stay at home, cannot go to school and therefore lack of education once they become adult. Because of this, they cannot access high profile jobs, and remain financially dependent, taking care of the children and always relying on their husband. The result is that women don't have a voice in their family, but also in society and in the country as a whole.



Image Credit to Color Silk

Social Intervention and Impact Created

Color Silk's goal is to provide rural women with a secure, safe and permanent job that can they realize while staying with their family in Cambodia. The organization seeks to help women rise out of poverty so that they can become financially autonomous and live their life with dignity—in other words, to empower women. At the same time, the ancient silk weaving culture, very famous in Cambodia, is at risk of vanishing. Only middle-aged women continue to weave the silk, whereas younger generations are not aware of this cultural heritage. Knowledge and skills about this complex art are being lost.

In an effort to save this part of the Cambodian culture, Color Silk helps women who are willing to take silk weaving as source of income by providing employment opportunity and income generation through a safe work in their community. This action enables the economic development of more isolated rural areas. Home-based enterprise also permits groups of women to work and live together close to their family. They work in good conditions, at home, and can take care of their children at the same time. They execute customers' command



and Color Silk Enterprise buys their products at a fair price.

To date (2016), Color Silk has 450 weavers as members of its community, and covers 6 villages in the South-western province of Takeo. Members generate an average income of \$210 per month, a substantial increase from their income before they joined the Color Silk Community. Color Silk supplies more than 50 boutiques in both Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, and provides 3 unique products of silk fabric, silk sarong and silk scarves to its customers.

Color Silk has grown from strength to strength since 2009, and has won many competitions and received many awards since. In 2011, Color Silk was awarded a grant from Starbucks' Share Planet Grant; and was selected to the final Presentation Round of the Global Social Venture Competition-South East Asia in Bangkok, Thailand. In 2013, Color Silk was elected to join the 5th Global Forum in South Africa from Mekong Women Entrepreneur Challenge contest organized by the InfoDev and World Bank.

Current Marketing Efforts

The following are current channels of marketing for Color Silk:

- Social Media / Viral Marketing - particularly:

1. Facebook
2. Twitter
3. Youtube

- Newspapers and Magazines

1. Phnom Penh and The Cambodia Daily:
2. News Channels Bayon TV (Idea Corner) and CTN (local product program)
3. Cambodia Women Radio (WMC 102)

These programs are very popular and it well-recognized within our target audience.

- International Networking

Particularly with the World Fair Trade Organization to help tell our story and reach communities outside Cambodia. We also search for partners in ASEAN countries with a focus on silk and weaving through workshops and various training. Lastly, we look for volunteers and students, especially those who wish to write their thesis on the work done by Color Silk. These channels help spread the word by mouth.

- LinkedIn

To reach professional market to enhance human resources department.

- Government Channels

We work with with the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Education and the Ministry of Fine Arts to introduce and promote silk weaving as a formal subject taught or offered at schools.



Challenges Faced and Project Scope

Students who wish to collaborate with Color Silk will work to answer the following questions:

- What is the potential for fashion silk to enter the market in Singapore? How might the market vary across sectors? How can Color Silk reach this market?
- What are the most popular silk products in Singapore? How do they differ across gender, racial and economic profiles?
- Who would be potential competitors? At what price must various products be sold in order to out-do these competitors while maintaining profit margins for Color Silk?

Useful Links and Resources

Company Website: <http://colorsilkcommunity.wixsite.com/colorsilk-cambodia>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/colorsilk.community>

Additional References

Award received from Starbucks Share Planet Grant, through YouthActionNet program collaboration between the International Youth Foundation (IYF) and the Starbucks Foundation, 2011:

<http://youthactionnet.org/index.php?fuse=showresourcedetails&resourceid=23333>

Global Fellowship Award granted to founder Vanntha Ngorn from YouthActionNet a program of International Youth Foundation (IYF), Washington DC, USA, 2010:

www.youthactionnet.org

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For sample profiles of silk weavers employed by Color Silk, contact Madi Lommen at madison.lommen@u.yale-nus.edu.sg.