

FREE makeup for you!

FEBRUARY 2004

marie claire

BEAUTY

25 new ways to save your skin

EASY FAT-BURNING TIPS (THAT WORK!)

sex secrets

no one else will tell you

What **YOUR LOOK** says about you

How **NAUGHTY** are you? 4500 readers confess!

AFGHAN WOMEN: A desperate new cry for help

NICOLE KIDMAN
"10 TRUTHS ABOUT ME"

721

NEW IDEAS to flatter your figure



india

Sealing their embroidered garments, like this wedding blouse, is one of the few jobs bridal women are permitted to take.

south africa

Mama is single-handedly supporting her six children through her basket weaving.

hanging by a thread

Seventy percent of the world's poor are women, living on less than \$1 a day. For many, selling their handmade crafts—from basic baskets to intricate embroidery—means the difference between starvation and survival

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAOLA GIANTURGO AND TOBY THRESE

guatemala the weavers

Albertina Panamayche lives in a hillside complex of five small buildings. Each structure has its own function: One holds a small kitchen with a wood-burning

oven, another is a shed full of dry corn cobs for tortillas, another serves as a chicken coop, and finally, there is an outhouse. Albertina has electricity, but no running water. For most of her life, Albertina has worked as a *spunata* weaver, blending natural shades of gray, sand, green, and brown cotton threads into Guatemala's traditional striped fabrics, which

are then used for everything from rugs to dresses. Albertina began to weave on a child-size loom when she was 7. By age 10, she'd graduated to a grown-up's loom. Her first sale netted 32 cents. But the weaving business is shrinking, due to the fact that some men now use foot looms, and can sell their weavings cheaper than those done by hand. As a result, women like Albertina have to reduce their prices in order to compete. Today, she worries that Guatemala's weaving tradition may be lost altogether. "Some women don't even know how to weave," she laments. "They buy from other villages instead of making their own."

If hand-weaving disappears, it will be an economic—as well as cultural—loss for this single mother. "School costs are \$13 a month. I can barely give the children money for anything except school," she admits. Albertina, who never graduated high school, wishes her daughters could become teachers, but she cannot afford the required education. Instead, she has taught them to weave, hoping the business will stay strong enough for her children to earn a living to

Every year, women worldwide lose out on \$11 trillion in unpaid or underpaid wages.

(according to the United Nations)

60% of women in Guatemala are illiterate.



The life of the weaver continues closely with the legacy of her craft: Guatemala's women have the lowest life-expectancy rate and highest maternal-mortality rate of any Central American country.

After losing her husband to alcoholism, Albertina (above) is raising four children.

oven, another is a shed full of dry corn cobs for tortillas, another serves as a chicken coop, and finally, there is an outhouse. Albertina has electricity, but no running water.

For most of her life, Albertina has worked as a *spunata* weaver, blending natural shades of gray, sand, green, and brown cotton threads into Guatemala's traditional striped fabrics, which



Most tribal women are illiterate, so Mankorba (center) asks them to "sign" with a thumbprint in order to be paid for their work.

india the mirror embroiderers

Inside Mankorba Jordeja's hut 20 women crowd around in the growing darkness. There are no windows, just an open doorway. Mankorba has smoothed the walls with mud and dung. The

90% of rural female workers are labeled "housewives" and excluded from the formal definition of economic activity, despite working at least 35-hour weeks.

only furniture is an aluminum bed frame, propped against the wall. There is no electricity. Someone illuminates the crowd with a flashlight.

Mankorba, 35, is the leader of a group of mirror embroiderers—a craft almost as old as India's 3,000-year-old textile history. Mothers begin at each daughter's birth to create the embroidery—sparkling designs sewn onto fabric—for future wedding clothes, household linens, and camel coverings. Having completed second grade, Mankorba is the only woman in the group to have attended school. Now she works for SEWA, the Self Employed

Women's Association, an organization helping India's tribal women reach more buyers and get better prices for their wares. So far, SEWA has signed up 2,000 craftswomen.

During the meeting, Mankorba eagerly talks about the education she wants for her daughter. But when asked about continuing her own schooling, she bristles. "We're here talking [to each other]," she says. "We have come out. That itself is an achievement."

Traditionally, a married tribal woman cannot even go outside her house to fetch water; she has to ask her son or husband to get it. But recently, some women decided to "come out" of their houses, riding bearings from their husbands. (Even educated men are against such socializing because they fear their control over women will end.)

With the help of SEWA, the women are beginning to meet openly. Selling their craft has given them reason to venture beyond village borders. When the women first go to SEWA's headquarters, most have never sat on a train, let alone seen a computer, fax machine, or television, like those at SEWA's office. Mirror embroidery may be a craft, but to these women, it's also a vehicle for revolution.

turkey the dollmakers

In the village of Sogank, there are 50 stone houses and 30 dollmakers. Here, men work in the fields but women provide the income. At 9 every summer morning, tour buses crawl into the Sogank ravine and dollmakers rush from their houses and begin hawking with visitors. A doll sells for \$3, but materials cost \$1 and the doll cooperative gets 60 cents. If a woman sells one doll a day, she is left with \$1.40—barely enough to buy the basic necessities for her family.



In virtually every country around the world, women work longer hours than men—and earn less.

Sogank women can make up to 18 dolls a day, but they may only sell one or two, leaving them with less than \$2 to feed their family.

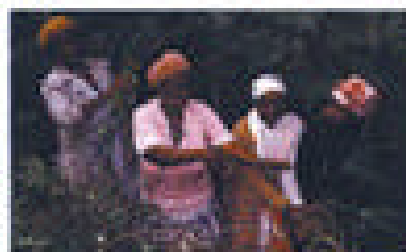
Twenty miles away, in the city of Kaymakli, vendors who bought dolls in Sogank at a discount mark up the price and sell them to tourists, claiming to have made the dolls themselves. These vendors are diverting customers away from Sogank, a mountain village often difficult to reach. The dollmakers' biggest fear? Losing business could hurt their children's chances for a good education.

One dollmaker, Hatice Givren, used an IUD to space her three children eight years apart, so she could afford to give each a better education. "It is irresponsible to have children you cannot educate," she explains. Hatice dreams of sending her two daughters away to continue schooling. "Because only with education is self-sufficiency possible." And if her dream comes true for her children, what would she live for herself? Hatice says with a smile, "I would like to live in a world where everyone's children are as happy and as self-sufficient as mine." D

south africa the basket weavers

Standing in the middle of a group of Zulu dancers, Mamsisa Nyawo wears the traditional black leather skirt, flare-crowned red straw hat, and shawl of a married woman. Wives are usually forbidden to work, but Mamsisa has her husband's permission to hold a job, at least until he finds one: A pipe-fitter, he is looking for work in Newcastle, three hours away. Other men have gone to labor in the mines, leaving the women to support their families.

As it has been for much of history, the Zulu life is full of challenges. In the 1990s, apartheid laws forced all blacks—three quarters of the country's population—into 10 "homelands." South Africa's 9 million Zulus were relocated to geographically scattered,



economically nonviable land near Durban, South Africa.

Today, women like Mamsisa make and sell baskets to feed their families. Carol Sutton, owner of a South Africa store called Hala Weavers, is a big buyer. The arrangement benefits all parties: "Last week an elderly woman showed us three baskets, the first she'd ever made," Sutton says. "They were beautiful; we paid her in crisp notes. She threw the money in the air, holding out her hands to catch the fluttering bills. She told us this was the first money she'd ever earned; tonight she could buy food instead of hoping others would have some to spare."

Women provide the primary financial support for 25% of the world's families, and the sole support for another 25%.

Zulu women (above) pick palm leaves, used for making baskets. The leaves swell when wet, forming a water-tight vessel.



panama the mola makers

Among the few indigenous American groups who have never been conquered are the Kuna Indians of Panama. For centuries, the Kuna have maintained a traditional way of life on their ancestral lands, including making mola, intricately appliquéd pictures of Indian life sewn onto everything from handbags to blouses. Virtually every Kuna woman makes mola.

Yasmina Echea De La Ossa Tejada is a mola maker. She is a single mother of two—her parents' disapproval of her husband caused the breakup of her marriage after only three years. Today, Yasmina raises her son and daughter in a one-room hut connected to her mother's hut by bamboo fences.

"If I sell three mola blouses, my income is \$90 a month," Yasmina says. (Molas can retail for up to \$60 in the United States; in Panama they sell for

29% of people in Panama live on less than \$2 a day.

Yasmina (above right) is raising daughter Erica (shown left) alone after her parents divorced her husband unwillingly. He was a politician, not a farmer and leader like Yasmina's father.

\$15 to \$35.) An expert artist, Yasmina is also an entrepreneur, having launched her first venture at age 19. "I had never seen molas on display—I made up the idea," Yasmina says. "I charged \$10 for a skirt with a mola that took me one week to make."

The young mother is careful with the money she earns. "The others don't save," Yasmina says. "They purchase molas to wear instead of making them themselves. That's squandering money."

Excerpt from Her Hands Craftswomen: Changing the World by Paula Gonsky and Taly Teitel, published by PowerHouse Books © February 2004

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Buying these crafts helps support women and their families

- Guatemalan weaving: Pro-Teje Project, Incel Museum, Guatemala City: 011-502-331-3638
- Turkish dolls: Contact Sevin Karabiyik by calling 011-60-332-883-0854 or sending an e-mail to info@argemartTurkey.com
- Indian mirror embroidery: www.balucraft.org
- South African baskets: www.thefairartgallery.com/safrica.htm
- Panamanian molas: www.erba.com