



Photo: Joseph De Leo

Frank Millero with Anak Norm, director of VillageWorks

People Support People

“It was a great opportunity to hone our professional skills, feed our souls, and create a new creative partnership.”

- Frank Millero, SERRV Board Member and Product Designer
- Joseph De Leo, Photographer

Across the road from the Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh stands the main office and storefront of VillageWorks, a testament to the resilience and vision of the Cambodian people. VillageWorks was founded more than 10 years ago not only to provide income and skills training to rural women, but also to bring meaning to their lives by restoring their spirits and affirming their human worth.

When SERRV and VillageWorks became partners in 2005, we recognized that VillageWorks had the potential to grow and that we at SERRV may be able to help them achieve their vision. Over the past few years, SERRV has supported VillageWorks by funding new weaving looms for more efficient production, encouraging them to begin a screen printing division to create more jobs, and providing training on design and market trends. When VillageWorks
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Frank and Joseph with artisans and some of their children in Phnom Penh

approached us last year about funding for a new production unit, we suggested that the next step needed to focus on product design instead. VillageWorks readily agreed—finding inspiration for new product designs can be challenging for any organization, especially when you are halfway around the world from your market audience.

SERRV board member Frank Millero lent his expertise to VillageWorks by volunteering to spend a month in Cambodia. Frank is a product designer, consultant and educator based in New York. He has designed products for companies including West Elm, and teaches Industrial Design at Pratt Institute. He was joined by Joseph De Leo, a professional photographer who has shot for numerous cookbooks and for high-profile magazines like Martha Stewart Living and Food & Wine. With funding from SERRV and the Arzbaeher Family Foundation to cover airfare and living expenses, they traveled to Cambodia to assist VillageWorks with product designs and to document their work and life through photography and video.

Frank and Joseph divided their time between Phnom Penh and Baray, a district about 3 hours away, with artisans who specialize in weaving, natural dyes, sewing, embroidery, and screen printing.

Through extensive pre-travel preparation and on-site discussions of color and trends, Frank collaborated with staff members to create new designs, review constructions and techniques, and develop ideas for new fabrics and products. With numerous trips to the workshops in Baray, he and the artisans developed and finalized 50 new product samples, as well as palettes for natural dyed silk. The samples include new shoulder bags, accessories, scarves, pillows, and other textiles that use new colorways and fabric combinations.

In Frank's words, "We titled this project "People Support People" because it reveals how SERRV's activities build a chain of mutual support connecting people in the U.S. to artisan communities throughout the world."

Watch for new products and designs from VillageWorks later this fall and in 2013!

New Partners in India Conserve

Born of a desire to reduce India's mountain of waste, improve energy efficiency, and help some of Delhi's poorest, Conserve India achieves its mission by turning trash into fashion. Instead of recycling, they "upcycle" by washing, drying, and reusing materials.

Today Conserve India employs hundreds of people from Delhi's most disadvantaged communities, including people living in slums beside the dumps where they source materials to use in products. Conserve pays the trash collectors far more than they could earn elsewhere, and ensures they have enough to build simple brick homes to replace cardboard structures. Conserve also supports schools in the slums where many of its employees live.

SERRV is excited to be working with Conserve. Their products make their debut in our Autumn 2012 Catalog.



Photo: Hazel Thompson

An artisan with Conserve in Delhi

Noah's Ark

The founder of Noah's Ark, Samuel Masih, created the business after learning about the plight of artisans in India, particularly those in metal work. He wanted to bring better wages and conditions to the artisans. Samuel started with a simple one-room workshop and today Noah's Ark employs more than 500 artisans and 24% of them are women.

Noah's Ark not only provides employment to disadvantaged artisans, they also fund education for children and clean drinking water systems, offer free sewing classes for young women, and invest in small-scale infrastructure to meet artisans' needs.

SERRV is proud to be working with Noah's Ark and several of their products are featured in our Autumn 2012 Catalog.

Artisans in Central America

Earlier this year, product development specialist Maria Wood traveled to Mexico and Nicaragua to visit artisan workshops and develop new products with our partners.

While in Mexico, she spent time with long-term SERRV partner UPA, a cooperative of sixteen artisans. Together the artisans create bold jewelry designs out of metals and resin and use the income to provide for their families. The cooperative strongly emphasizes giving back to their community and is currently active with garbage collection campaigns, donations to schools, and support of youth programs.

Maria also met with members of UPA's new Women's Project, which will train impoverished single mothers living in the town of Taxco el Viejo in jewelry making. The women are very enthusiastic about the program, as it will give them a steady income to support their children.



Manuel with participants in the Women's Project

Manuel, the president of the cooperative, said, "Through UPA, artisans have an opportunity to a better life. Only together we can achieve results that can't be obtained if we are on our own."

Maria also visited Casa Romero, a SERRV partner based in Cuernavaca, Mexico, and visited a new partner in Nicaragua to meet artisans and work on products for 2013.

After her trip, Maria commented, "I was inspired by the artisans' work ethic and enthusiasm to develop new products, but I was mostly impressed by their motivation to help each other have a better quality of life."

Craft with a Conscience

SERRV was pleased to welcome Sunil Chitrakar, director of Mahaguthi: Craft with a Conscience to our offices and stores during his visit to the U.S. SERRV has partnered with Mahaguthi for twenty years, supporting their work with socially and economically disadvantaged artisans of Nepal.

Sunil shared stories of the impact that fair trade craft work has on the artisans they train and employ with staff and customers. Mahaguthi provides all artisans with advance payments on orders and skills training, and they

have also invested in benefits ranging from sanitation training to stove efficiencies that decrease the use of wood. Mahaguthi's support reaches thousands of additional artisans, mainly women, throughout various regions of Nepal. Sales of Mahaguthi's crafts also help to run an ashram and a women's center. These centers provide rehabilitation, shelter, food, support and vocational training and weaving work for women.

While in the U.S., Sunil also met with SERRV's product development team to discuss product designs and with SERRV's graphic designer to plan improvements to their website.

SERRV is proud to have such a long-standing partnership with Mahaguthi, an organization strongly rooted in the principles of fair trade and lifting low-income artisans up through craft.



Sunil with SERRV marketing associate Meghan Roberts at our store in Madison, Wisconsin

Eradicating poverty is about education and empowerment.

With knowledge and skills, hardworking artisans can develop successful, sustainable businesses that will provide for their families and communities for a lifetime.

Your tax-deductible* donation will allow us to support more struggling families in their journey to a better, more sustainable life.

Please use the enclosed postage-paid envelope to support our work today. Or, visit us online at www.serrv.org/donate.

*SERRV is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Visit www.serrv.org/donate for financial and regulation information.



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to eradicate poverty wherever it resides
 by providing opportunity and support
 to artisans and farmers worldwide



2012 "Best in Fair Trade" winner!
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Coffee that Can Teach Children

With support from Gumutindo Coffee Cooperative and premiums received from sales of fair trade and organic coffee, Justine Watalunga has managed to construct a school for children orphaned to HIV/AIDS in her Ugandan community.

Gumutindo actively promotes the involvement of women farmers, staff and board members. The cooperative provides medical clinics, agricultural training, and market access to nearly 9,000 small-scale coffee farmers located on the Eastern slopes of Mt. Elgon. Gumutindo's delicious fair trade coffee is imported and roasted by Just Coffee cooperative and can be found in Peace on Earth and African Sunrise blends carried by SERRV.



Photo: Just Coffee