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**PAGE 3: B. ABOUT YOU**


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**Q1: Respondent details**

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**Q2: Country or Customs territory**

CANADA

**Q3: Organization**

NGO

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**PAGE 4: C. ABOUT YOUR CASE STORY**


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**Q4: Title of case story**

Design Africa Program : Market Access, Export Competitiveness and Digital Bridge for Made in Africa Artisans Products to Canadian and International Buyers

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**Q5: Case story focus**

E-commerce development and efforts to bridge the "digital divide".

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**Q6: Case story abstract**

Component 1: the design africa brand concept emphasized the "story" behind the products: the story of the designer or of the design; the story of the craftsman or his/her materials, the story of the community where each product was made. The designafrica.net was created, as part of this component, to have an online trade platform and catalogue that reached international markets virtually. The online store was created in September 2009 until February 2015 when both TFO Canada and SATIEC decided to shut it down.

Over the life of the website there were 29 designers with virtual stores, along with the 5 partners of the program and 569 potential buyers recorded as registrants of the website. There were 725 requests for information submitted to suppliers via the website. The portal had over 105, 000 unique visitors. There are success stories from the program such as Neigst from Ethiopia read about it here [http://www.tfoCanada.ca/docs.php?page=5\\_5&chapid=4](http://www.tfoCanada.ca/docs.php?page=5_5&chapid=4).

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**Q7: Who provided funding?**

Other (please specify)  
TFO Canada + South African Department of Trade & Industry (DTI)

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**Q8: Project/Programme type**

Regional

**Q9: Your text case story**

In November of 2007, the DTI approved the Design Africa Business Plan for funding in the amount of R35 million (South African Rand), to continue the initiative for an additional four years

TFO Canada in acting on its mandate of poverty reduction through market access partnered with South Africa Textiles Industry Export Council (SATIEC) to empower African design SMEs to access international markets through the Design Africa program. Design Africa provided in-country marketing and product development support for selected participants and it provides market access opportunities for these products and their companies through trade fair participation in the EU, South Africa and North America. The program supported 6 Ethiopian companies, 1 Ghanaian, 5 Malian, 2 Senegalese and 5 South Africa that created home products such as furniture, pottery/ceramics, textiles, carpets, tableware and basketry. Support provided were advisory services on branding and export competitiveness, tradeshow participation, training and trade missions.

The project's key objectives are to build a brand image around the innovative, contemporary and high quality home interior products available from Africa and to help counter the prevalent negative and stereotypical images of the continent and its products (e.g. masks and giraffe carvings); to improve the export competitiveness of the participating companies; and to develop linkages for African exporters seeking new markets in North America. there were four components under the project as follows:

Component #1: Advisory support to the Branding activities

Component #2: Technical assistance with the implementation of market development activities in South Africa (with respect to the North American market)

Component #3: Advisory support with respect to the identification of partners and selection of events for European and Japanese market entry and linkage activities

Component #4: Advisory support with respect to the formation of a pan-African steering committee for Design Africa and technical assistance with respect to start-up program management activities undertaken by SATIEC for Design Africa

Over the course of the four years a number of activities took place under the four components of the project, delivered by TFO Canada's staff and associates in their respective field e.g. branding and marketing along with SATIEC staff and associates. The Netherlands Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI) delivered an Export Development Program to the Design Africa project.

Here are highlights of some of the activities of the program:

In 2008 there was a mission to Salon du Design de Montreal (SIDIM) and a retail market visit to Toronto by 10 companies from Menby's Design from Ethiopia; Absolute Furnishings, Atmek & Eco Yarns, Kpando Pottery and Tekura Enterprise from Ghana, Aboubakar Fotana and le Ndomo from Mali and Diana Carmichael, iMiso Ceramic and Sango Ceramics of South Africa (3).

In 2009 7 companies, Tekura from Ghana; Sammy Products from Ethiopia; Diallo Designs and Aboubakar Fofana from Mali; Gone Rural from Swaziland and Diana Carmichael and Zen Zulu from South Africa participated in Maison et Objet in Paris. Diallo Design received a number of orders from the show.

Partnership was developed with Amaridian USA Gallery in New York to represent a number of the designers such as Tekura and Kpando Ceramics as they were already representing Diallo Designs, iMiso Ceramics and Ronel Jordaan of South Africa.

In November 2009. design africa was featured at a conference on Intellectual Property for International Development hosted by the UN's World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in Geneva, Switzerland. The conference organizers sponsored the participation of and presentations by designer-manufacturers Cheick Diallo from Mali and Ronel Jordaan from South Africa. The Design Africa presentations demonstrated the real-life challenges in IP protection faced by SMEs in developing countries. Both Cheick and Ronel have had their products copied by European designers. Subsequent to the event WIPO wrote about design africa in their quarterly magazine (see "Enhancing the Use of IP for Development" on [http://www.wipo.int/wipo\\_magazine/en/2009/06/article\\_0011.html](http://www.wipo.int/wipo_magazine/en/2009/06/article_0011.html)).

In September of 2009 the online trade portal and catalogue designafrica.net was created and stayed online until February 2015. Please find the visitor statistics for the site below:

Lifetime of Design Africa website: Sept. 2009 to Feb. 2015

Year	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Total page views
2009 (from Sept. 1st)	1,550	1,991	15,698
2010	14,237	21,125	92,866
2011	19,963	29,969	109,244
2012	23,660	30,717	112,022
2013	25,202	34,752	117,579
2014	18,192	29,265	86,824
2015 (to Feb. 28th)	2,295	3,277	10,598
<b>Totals</b>	<b>105,099</b>	<b>151,096</b>	<b>544,831</b>

Over the life of the website there were 29 designers with virtual stores, along with the 5 partners of the program and 569 potential buyers recorded as registrants of the website. There were 725 requests for information submitted to suppliers via the website. Sales resulting from the requests received were not recorded. There were no filters for the website data statistics within the site to identify serious buyer request versus curious buyer inquiries.

#### Q10: Lessons learnt

The virtual trade platform designafrica.net which was hosted by TFO Canada and managed by SATIEC over the period 2009 to 2015 had a number of lessons for the partners:

1. Creating an online trade portal is just one step in bringing developing countries designers closer to the national and international marketplace, there should have been dedicated support to the users of the portal is monumental to the success of facilitating business transactions.
2. Providing market access via e-commerce platform requires continuous updates of goods and prices along with engagement with potential buyers and importers. Concise and clear information should have been provided to the online store owners on their respective obligation and responsibilities in keeping their online stores updated with new products, updated or new contact information and responding to request for information in a timely manner. There should be an approval process to differentiate legitimate importer/buyer companies from ones that are not established companies within the sectors.
3. Set specific sales targets for each designer as part of the project with agreed upon check in points to follow up with online store owners on the request for information and products they receive and if needed do some hand-holding or provide guidance to them on how to negotiate sales.
4. Include in the project plan monitoring and evaluation for at least 6-9 months after the project ended to maintain contact with beneficiaries of the project and measure their sustainability in the market based on the capacity building lessons learnt.
5. Project management team should have developed relationships with buyers/import firms and facilitate introductions to the designers. Having a number of importers as partners of design africa would have been monumental in designers clearly understanding their roles in the buying process from interest in their product to after sales services.
6. Branding and great visuals were useful and award worthy however having a marketing communications campaign running concurrently with the Design Africa would have increased the success of quality potential buyers/importers visiting designafrica.net