



A “Marvelous” Journey

Tanzania native, Flotea Massawe, changed her life when she started a small handicrafts boutique. Now she is changing others’ lives by training and employing women and young adults in need.

In July 2010, the U.S. Department of State hosted the first leadership conference for the African Women’s Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP) in Washington, DC. Among the 38 inaugural members was United States African Development Foundation (USADF) grantee, Flotea Massawe. Other attendants included Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and other U.S. government officials. The opportunity would be life changing for anyone, let alone a Tanzanian female entrepreneur, with no more than a secondary-level education.



Flotea Massawe shows off one of the many awards she has won for her handicrafts and business practices. The USADF grant helped her expand her business by providing funds for training, marketing and business equipment.

Massawe founded Marvelous Flotea Company Limited in 1992, after seven years of creating colorful textile products from merchants’ leftover scraps. It was her devotion and determination that kept the company going. By 2007, Massawe had a small staff that included her two daughters, some shareholders, and a catalog that included a broad range of products from intricate window curtains to decorated handbags.

In 2007, Massawe applied for a USADF grant that would enable her to step up to a new level. The grant funds would be used to improve and expand the company’s facilities, provide for business training and increased marketing. A breakthrough came when she used some of the funds to attend trade shows in New York and Germany. Her presence at these events resulted in a dramatic increase in demand for her hand-crafted products. The new demand for product in turn required Massawe to nearly double the size of the workforce she had before the grant was signed.

Massawe has won awards in Tanzania and Nepal, and her products are now sold internationally. In 2010 she announced a partnership with American designer Rachel Roy; the collection is exclusively featured in select Macy’s stores.

The self-taught business mogul inspires hundreds of women and young-adults in her hometown, Dar es Salaam—many of whom are widows or orphans—to think about their own dreams. Since the founding of her business she has helped improve the lives of those who once said they “have no future,” by employing many and training many more. Among all of her awards and accomplishments, changing lives—especially the lives and role of women—is what she is most proud of.

Massawe maintains that ambitious spirit and continues to work toward a future in which men and women have equal investments and power in Africa. She likens the progress of women in Africa to being a passenger on a train. She said, “I am on the train. I might be in the third class, but I am on the train—and on the train I can move toward first class...I am doing something. I am moving.” Through her words and example she inspires all her employees, no matter what their present circumstance is, to keep moving forward.

USADF is an independent United States Government Agency dedicated to helping Africa’s most marginalized and underserved populations. USADF partners with African led and managed groups to address social issues and increase economic growth. To learn more about this grant and other USADF projects, visit www.usadf.gov.