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Ethiopia

Ararat Tamirat

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Ethiopia

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"My handwoven baskets and home accessories are a mix of Ethiopian traditions and innovative design."



Established in 2021, Tuba by Ararat is an ethical Ethiopian lifestyle brand, manufacturing hand-woven basket-ware for home accessories and traditional textiles. Using linen and *sebezz*, a weed which grows naturally in Ethiopia, its products match modern design and color combinations with the traditional basket weaving technique used in Ethiopia for centuries. Blending tradition and innovative design, Ararat brought to the market newly styled products that fit modern living and working spaces.

Ethiopia has strong artisan traditions, and basket production is one of them. Almost every woman in the rural part of Ethiopia learns how to make baskets from their mothers at a young age, but this skill has rarely been turned into viable businesses. Baskets are mainly sold at local markets, with very low profit margins, as a source of income for many families living in rural areas out of subsistence farming. International companies selling baskets in foreign markets are aware of the high quality of Ethiopian-made baskets, but their production was never organized nor structured in a commercial way. As a result, only a limited number of units were sold or exported with higher added value by designers.

Ararat, an architect by education, saw an opportunity to add value to the traditional basket production – 100% handmade – by organizing manufacturing activities and creating design and patterns that would appeal to international buyers. Her company also creates jobs for women in rural areas in Ethiopia, where its workshops are located, mainly in Bahir Dar, Amhara region, and in Addis Ababa, a city surrounded by farmers who grow raw material for baskets and in which most women know how to weave baskets. She wants her business to improve the quality of life of the communities around it. Tuba by Ararat incorporates environmentally friendly and sustainable practices into the production process and distribution services.

4- and 5-star hotels, lodges, architectural consulting offices, higher governmental ministry offices, embassies and tourists in Ethiopia and the middle upper class national population are among the company's main customers. Ararat was awarded by the Female in Business Acceleration Program 2022 and was nominated for The Entrepreneur Africa TEA award as one of the top 10 start-up companies in Africa.

Tuba by Ararat started with 5 employees, working hard on creating a brand and marketing. These efforts pushed sales up very rapidly over the past two years, both locally and internationally. The company currently employs 45 women, but her expansion plan would require to reach 500 by 2030.



Ararat attended an Empretec Entrepreneurship Training Workshop (ETW) organized by the Entrepreneurship Development Institute, the Empretec national counterpart in Ethiopia, and found it a game changer. *“It helped me change the way I have been managing my business, particularly in areas such as financial management, human resources and customer service”*, she recognizes.

Empretec helped her keeping a clear focus of her company's goals and objectives. She also learned how important it is for her as a leader to be an effective communicator and create a culture of recognition and feedback among her employees.

Ararat wants her brand and products to be recognized internationally, and she is working to expand her production and penetrate the European and US markets with upgraded products that could be sold in premium and luxury segments.