



the  
*Off Ramp*

2023 Impact Report

# from nell

Retirement is a nebulous word at times. Retired from what? For me it is not retirement from The Off Ramp or Threads by Nomad. Retirement is from a position I have worked in for the past thirty-seven years as a minister.

For thirty-seven years, we have crossed cultural boundaries, learned other languages, lived on three different continents, and traveled to approximately 25 countries. Through these experiences we have met the most amazing people. Most of them were either displaced (refugee, immigrant, International, asylum seeker, victim of human trafficking) or were in danger of displacement. It was during these experiences that Threads by Nomad and then The Off Ramp were born in Houston, Texas.

The pandemic came and a precipitous move to the east coast was made. We always knew the move would eventually happen. We just did not know it would be that soon. It turns out this was a good thing! It allowed us to relearn the area, get a feel for the situation of those displaced in the Carolinas, and restructure for our new environment.

We are excited! We are in a position to take The Off Ramp and Threads by Nomad to the next level in this new environment. But we have NOT been idle! You will read details of the past year in this impact report. But an exciting recap of the past 3 years on the east coast includes:

- Resettling 3 refugee families with an ongoing deep relationship with a family from Afghanistan
- Starting a furniture bank that served more than 20 families in its first year
- Working with seamstresses in various areas in the Carolinas
- Grants for numerous seamstresses for machines and supplies as they desire to work from home
- Active collaborative partnerships in Uganda, Senegal, Kyrgyzstan, and Kenya
- And projects continue in Houston.



We are indeed ready to take this to the next level.

Sharing this report with you brings us great joy! Why? Because you have been a part of this work from the beginning.

We invite you to continue to bring economic stability to those who are displaced or in danger of displacement. We have never been able to do this work without your support, and we won't be able to continue to do it now without you.

Thank you for being a change-maker!

With gratitude,

*nell*



# Ethiopia

Through the purchase of jewelry that is sold at [threadsbynoma.com](https://threadsbynoma.com), we have once again partnered with the Adera Foundation and Adera Designs. The Adera artisans upcycle discarded paper and retrieved bullet shells to make creative pieces for retail partners in the USA.

Adera provides a 20-week life skills training to prepare each woman to use her new income successfully and strategically. Each of the artisans receives a monthly salary that provides for her family's daily needs and enables her to save for the future. Many of the women struggled with handing over their children to the local government orphanage in order to have the children's needs be met. Adera eliminated the need for that desperate choice.

Adera provides a safe daycare for the children so the mothers can pursue work with complete peace of mind. Through the support of sponsors, Adera enables parents to work while preserving and strengthening the family unit. Adera desires to bring help and true hope, one woman at a time.

We also partner with Sabahar, a fair trade certified group of weavers providing a formal structure for the artisans, work safety and job security is critical to their long-term economic and social stability. Sabahar employs nearly 100 staff at the workshop, and works with another 75 weavers in their homes on a full-time basis.



*the impact is*

socio-economic  
cultural &  
environmental

# Haiti



Haiti Design Co was founded in 2014 with the goal to bring about sustainable development through design, training, and job creation.

A longtime favorite of Threads by Nomads customers, Haiti Design Co has been a retail partner yet again this year.

Haiti Design Co houses and partners with production teams working in many types of artisan crafting, including leatherwork, sewing, jewelry making, aluminum casting, metal work, weaving, beadwork, horn & bone, tailoring, and shoe making. They work to provide consistent employment in-house in order to give job training and stability to individuals in vulnerable situations, as well as raise up artisan leaders to succeed as independent entrepreneurs in the community.

Employees are trained in-house in leatherwork, sewing, or jewelry making. The goal is to provide skill training, consistent employment, and resources for personal growth. They are provided with a healthy lunch daily, health care options, savings accounts, emergency loans, counseling, and educational resources. A big focus here is creating a safe, encouraging, and family-like work environment where individuals are supported and pushed towards personal growth and

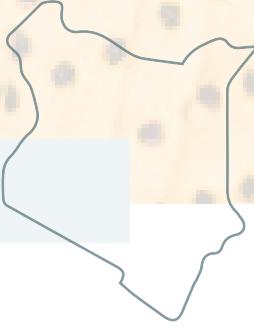


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We are helping Haiti Design Co bridge the gap between makers in the U.S. and makers in Haiti in order to share skills and create products with a meaningful impact.

- Christen

# Kenya



The partnership and engagement with The Esther Project Shop over the past three years has been a win for all concerned.

Stacy Hollingsworth, a friend and colleague of Nell's for over 30 years is the CEO. Stacy and her team have steadily built their network of artisans in vulnerable areas of Kenya. More good things are coming their way as they begin to reach out to vulnerable children as well.

The Esther Project Shop is no longer in need of assistance from The Off Ramp. Threads by Nomad is delighted to continue to provide a marketing arm for the products created by the Kenyan artisans.

The Esther Project Shop is in need of a vehicle to travel to various events to sell the artisans merchandise. The Off Ramp continues to make use of our network to help them secure a reliable used vehicle.

## A success story

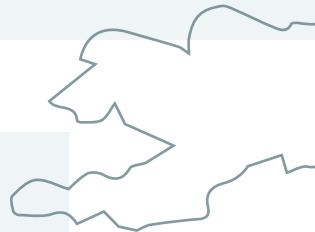
The Esther Project Shop is no longer in need of assistance from The Off Ramp.



# Kyrgyzstan

*more than a  
business*

business & budgeting  
general education  
basic life skills



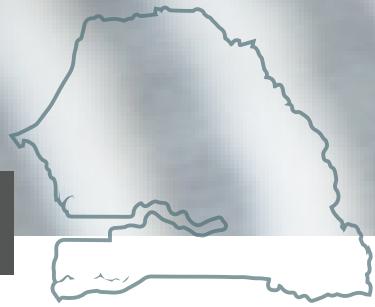
The Master's Handicrafts is an export business in the country of Kyrgyzstan dedicated to helping indigenous women of Central Asia develop marketable skills and provide for their families.

The Master's Handicrafts is more than a business. The Master's Handicrafts operates with a passion to see quality, sustainable, unique handicrafts from Kyrgyzstan be made available to markets throughout the world. They represent talented artisans who may be struggling financially or are in physical or emotional crisis, giving them hope by training their hands to make objects of beauty. They also look for opportunities to offer training in business and budgeting, general education, and basic life skills.

The Off Ramp supports The Master's Handicrafts through product development (5 new products this year!), the sale of products via [threadsbynomad.com](http://threadsbynomad.com), and marketing consultation.



# Senegal



In January, Christen made a trip to Dakar, Senegal to explore potential partnerships with a number of non-profits and individuals. The trip, by all measures, was a success!

## *Imadi Baskets*

Fatima (Fatou) Jobe founded Imadi Baskets to revive the Senegalese weaving tradition and invest in women in villages outside of Dakar. Fatou now works with 20 salaried weavers in Senegalese villages and over 100 weavers total. Many of these women are able to provide a living for themselves and for their families, preventing internal displacement and displacement abroad. She also continues to reinvest profits in local projects like school bathrooms and the distribution of sanitary pads to girls in these same villages—thereby securing their access to education and a better future and quality of life.



The Off Ramp is exploring opportunities to support Imadi Baskets through the creation of marketing materials (e.g. website, catalogs, and more) and communications consulting. In the meantime, Threads by Nomad has purchased its first selection of Imadi Baskets to arrive by shipping container this fall!

## *Kayoong*

Kayoong is a social enterprise that uses all locally sourced materials to ethically produce goods made by women vulnerable to poverty. It is truly inspiring to see the self-respect on a woman's face when she makes and sells her first rug or purse and realizes what she is capable of.

The women of Kayoong are taking control over their own livelihoods, building their confidence and independence while making fair wages. Kayoong's mission is to enable women to lift themselves up through art and community.

Threads by Nomad offered Kayoong its first opportunity to make itself available to an American market. Due to the complexities and costs of shipping as well as the need for a better understanding of the American market, Kayoong had been hesitant to grow in this way.

The Off Ramp and Threads by Nomad offered the Kayoong team the opportunity to explore opportunities in an environment of grace and with a spirit of experimentation.

## *Quartier Sandaga*

Quartier Sandaga is a locally and women-owned and operated small business in Dakar that focuses on teaching men and women to embroider clothing. In addition to extending to its employees a safe work environment, skill development and education, and a fair wage, Quartier Sandaga's mission is to celebrate the local dialects of West Africa by embroidering words and phrases on the garments they sell.

Threads by Nomad is now carrying a small selection of Quartier Sandaga's goods, and The Off Ramp may support the company in its growth through the provision of a grant.

## *Coton et Gourmandises*

Julia, the founder of Coton et Gourmandises, is temporarily living in Senegal, originally from France, and she is an expert in crochet. When her Senegalese housekeeper, Caroline, casually told her one day that, for financial reasons, she was going to have to take her kids out of private school, Julia knew she needed to help.

She began teaching her and eventually a group of women at a rehab center (for women who are vulnerable and/or have experienced domestic violence) called La Maison Rose how to crochet these dolls—inspired by Senegalese mothers and their children. She gives them the tools and material they need to make them, pays the women for each doll they make, and profits go back into the business to support its growth.



## *A magical moment*

Christen had the chance to travel into the villages and meet the women who make the Imadi baskets.

The women at La Maison Rose often find it difficult to leave, as they have no means to provide for themselves and their children. Having a skill and participating in a business like this one gives them opportunity, stability, dignity.

Through The Off Ramp, we're exploring options for partnership—including a potential grant for the purchase of new materials so she can train more women. But for now we're making the dolls available through Threads by Nomad!

Among these established non-profits and small businesses, there is a common theme— hope, dignity, and stability for the artisans who might otherwise not be able to support themselves and their families.

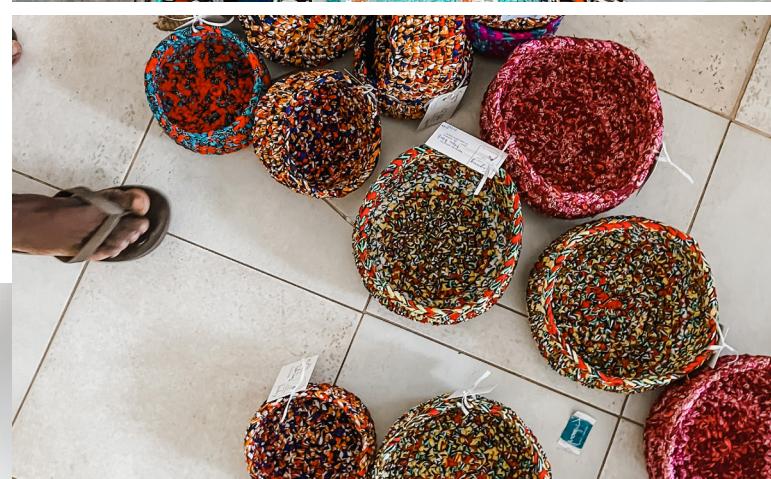
## *Design Revival*

One other important partnership—a friendship!—sparked during Christen's trip to Senegal. Through local connections, she met with Aminata Diouf who is known for her design talent, understanding of local textiles, and relationships with the best tailors in Dakar.

Christen spent three days with Aminata, learning about fabrics, meeting tailors, discussing patterns and sizing. This friendship has now culminated in the renewed availability of true clothing "collections" for Threads by Nomad, which had not been a possibility since the pandemic and move to South Carolina. There are challenges to work through; designing and creating a collection from two sides of an ocean isn't always easy. But we are delighted to once again celebrate art and culture in this way, and extend our love for style around the world to our customers!

## *A common theme*

Hope, dignity, and stability for the artisans who might otherwise not be able to support themselves and their families



# Turkey



Olive and Loom was founded by our friend, partner, and The Off Ramp grant recipient Ferzan Jaeger.

Raised in Istanbul and settled in the US, her passion is exploring new ways to bring these two cultures together.

She loves to surround herself with simple treasures that remind her of family, history, her favorite foods, and the vibrant Mediterranean lifestyle. After having kids, she became even more interested in raising them in a multicultural environment and teaching them her family traditions.

Olive & Loom's mission is to bring its retail and wholesale clients, like Threads by Nomad, traditional, old world goods with a fresh, modern aesthetic. The company focuses on practical items made using artisanal methods and all natural sources.

Thanks to frequent return visits to Turkey, Ferzan invests in artisans that have significant talent but are in need of skill development, business education, and personal support.

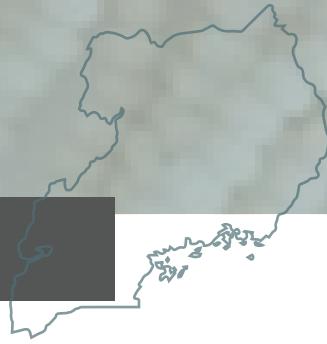
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**Olive & Loom brings you the textures, colors and scents of Turkey, my first home. I hope that each product brings you as much pleasure as it does me.**

- Ferzan



# Uganda



In February, Nell made a trip to Uganda to further our relationship with Sewing for Hope (a program of Refuge and Hope International) and Amani Sasa.

Refuge and Hope serves refugees in the urban center of Kampala. For a few years, Threads by Nomad and The Off Ramp have worked with Sewing for Hope, an entrepreneurial program teaching refugee women to make marketable garments and children's items.

We have worked on designs, quality control, acquiring necessary materials and tools, and perfecting sewing skills. During this trip Nell was able to work with MG, Fatima, and the Sewing for Hope team on a number of items. Clergy stoles, easy wear pants, and a jumpsuit were designed and prototypes produced. A trip to the fabric market permitted Nell to share with them about the types of fabrics that are best for some designs.



There was time to just sit and visit while we sewed. Nell learned of the many obstacles and challenges presented to refugee women in Kampala.

As the Sewing for Hope team progressed in production it became evident that more mentoring in the area of quality control was needed. To that end, The Off Ramp will be sending one of the members of the Sewing for Hope team to a tailoring school for six months. We plan a return visit in February 2025.

## Tailoring School

We will be sending one of the members of the Sewing for Hope team to tailoring school for six months.



## A New Shelter

We have supplied the necessary funds to build a new shelter for the basket weavers.

## Holistic Approach

Counseling, shelter, financial literacy and training, child care, and healthy food

Likewise our relationship with Amani Sasa has lasted for a few years now. It was a joy to meet Mama Elizabeth who has been teaching basket weaving to participants in Amani Sasa's program to the most vulnerable and traumatized refugee women in the Kampala area. By gaining these skills even as they receive holistic care, women are set on a path to independence and economic empowerment. Though these strong gifted women tried to teach Nell to basket weave, we

are sure purchasing their baskets from Threads by Nomad is a much better idea! What fun to work with them on design, pricing, quality control, and marketing.

Because we were able to see where and how they worked, when Amani Sasa asked for help building a new structure where the women can work, we were able to respond. Amani Sasa is in a rented facility that houses the women and children in their shelter program. While women are learning to weave, children are in day care and women work in a gazebo outside. The need has come to move. The Off Ramp has supplied the necessary funds to build a new shelter for the basket weavers.

We love Amani Sasa because of their holistic approach. Women receive counseling, shelter, financial literacy training, help with child care, healthy food, and an opportunity to live into their full potential. They are not defined by their refugee status or their trauma. We consider it a privilege to come alongside these women.



# North Carolina



United States

Moving to the east coast during a pandemic was not ideal. It took a while to begin to build relationships and gain a better understanding of the situation with refugees here in the Carolinas. We knew Threads by Nomad would look different. There would not be a production studio with a full time tailor and contract workers. Rather we would seek out those who were capable or had potential to create designs that were marketable. Understanding that many refugee women in the United States do not work outside the home, we sought ways to bring possibilities to them.

We are grateful for those we have met along the way and have become a part of the work here in the Carolinas.

We met Alia and Rebecca through Make Welcome Sewing, a non-profit sewing school for refugee women in Charlotte, NC. Alia has been embroidering our labels for our custom women's clergy robes and making our un-paper towels. Nell has also been teaching her how to make t-shirt quilts. She has made five and done a wonderful job.

Rebecca has just begun with The Off Ramp and Threads by Nomad. We were able to provide her and another seamstress with serger machines for their at home businesses. Rebecca began by altering some dresses. Currently we are working on patterns for her to begin making some tops for Threads by Nomad. The other recipient of a serger made our kitchen towels.

The Welcome House network provides temporary housing for refugees and immigrants in North Carolina. Through that network we met Alia and Shahnaz. Members of the network showed Nell and Christen some of their work. Nell has been able to work with Alia on designing and creating harem pants. Shahnaz has been working on creating clergy stoles.

*the impact is*

socio-economic  
cultural &  
environmental

The partnership with Make Welcome has been progressing for the past two years. The students at Make Welcome Sewing made 13 dog beds for a former client of Threads by Nomad. Using fabric from West Africa, they also created clergy stoles. Through a grant we have been able to supply sewing machines and supplies for graduates from their program.



# South Carolina



United States

During the summer of 2022, The Off Ramp became aware of the arrival of a dozen International teachers from several different countries. They would be teaching in the Rock Hill SC School District. Since they were arriving with just a suitcase, we created a furniture bank in partnership with the school district, a local non-profit and a local business. In the first year of existence the furniture bank served 21 households.

Two households receiving furniture were refugees arriving from Ukraine. We are grateful for the strong Ukrainian network in the Charlotte area that surrounded and helped them upon their arrival.

In August of 2022, we welcomed the H. family from Afghanistan to Rock Hill. A team of volunteers has journeyed the past year with the family helping them to

- Provision of housing
- Find work
- Gain medical care and extensive resources for the middle child who has spina bifida
- Pregnancy care for the mom
- Enrollment into school and extra language instruction for the children
- Secured a vehicle and taught mom and dad how to drive
- Financial literacy preparing the family for full independence in a place of their own
- Cultural acquisition as we shared holidays and birthdays together and other special events like a baby shower.
- ESL for mom and dad

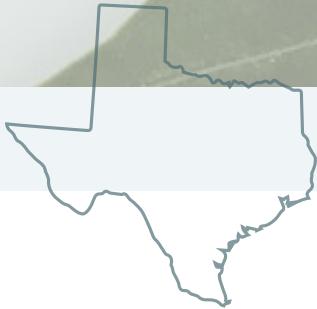


*It takes a team!*

A team of volunteers has welcomed the H. family to Rock Hill and helped them resettle.

# Texas

United States



A teenager from Houston, Alaya, has been one of our biggest and most active supporters. You may remember that she was the author and designer of last year's Impact Report, as part of her ongoing contribution.

This year, she took it upon herself to host two major events.

First, she and her family and friends packed and served more than 150 meals to refugee families for what has become her annual iftar dinner during Ramadan.

Alaya sought out the donations, coordinated the dinner, and oversaw the process.

Second, she collected backpacks and school supplies for children of refugee families starting school in Houston.

She set up an event outside of her mom's business, offering iced coffee and lemonade, and advertised the items that were needed.

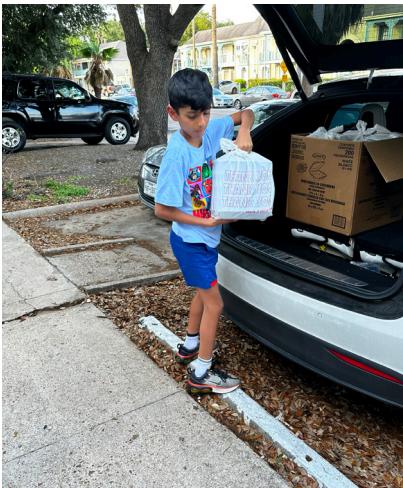
She succeeded in filling 50 backpacks with school supplies, all of which were delivered to an interfaith ministries non-profit for distribution.

Community efforts with major impact...led by our youngest and most committed supporter.



## *Our youngest supporter*

Houston local Alaya organized and oversaw two of our biggest events this year!



# Washington, D.C.



and Surrounding Area | United States

## Lupe | 1S1 Skincare

The Off Ramp is supporting Lupe, an asylee from Venezuela, in the growing of her skincare business. In the first half of 2023, the business was ready to launch its customer-facing retail branch—products were made, branding completed, and labels printed. Lupe then suffered a major injury, burning a significant portion of her body. She has been in recovery for a number of months and continues to heal. Once she can return to work, she is committed to reinvesting in

her partnership with The Off Ramp and the public launch of her business, 1S1 Skincare.



## Kin & Care

Kin and Care employs refugee women in the Washington, D.C. area. The small business's goal is to continue hiring more women and to offer more opportunities for them to thrive. To that end, The Off Ramp provided support and a grant to procure the raw materials for a new product line. A refugee from Iran was taught product development and mentored others.

Though this particular project is complete, we continue partnering with Kin & Care through the purchase of the products they make for sale at [threadsbynoma.com](https://threadsbynoma.com). Kin & Care recently moved to a larger location, where workshop and retail are combined, and the refugee women can interact with customers and share parts of their culture like serving coffee to every visitor!



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Our mission is to create a company with products made by refugee women in the Washington, DC area thereby empowering these women to build a place of their own for themselves and for their families.

- Ferzan







thank you

for being a *change*-maker

[theofframp.org](http://theofframp.org) | [threadsbynoma.com](http://threadsbynoma.com)