



Cojolya

ASSOCIATION OF MAYA WOMEN WEAVERS

Annual Report
2017/2018



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Executive Director	3
What We Do	5
Our impact	8
Looking Forward	10
Supporters	12
Association Members	14
Volunteers/Staff	15
Financial Summary	16



Letter From the Executive Director

Since 2014, Cojolya has had a Board of Directors composed solely of indigenous artisans. Through the generous donations from individuals and funds, we have been able to train the Board of Directors to understand their responsibilities and roles. This year, during the May 2017 General Assembly, our artisans elected a new Board of Directors, a mix of old and new faces. Women and young people make up the majority of the board; many of whom have received, or about to receive, their high school degrees.

As the years go by, the goals and objectives of the association change. While the majority of the goals are met, some remain out of reach due to the structure of the organization. However, as we pursue legalization and registration as a 501(c)3 in the United States, Cojolya hopes to find more funders to further community development, women empowerment, and the preservation of the back-strap loom.

To economically empower the weavers of Santiago Atitlan, Cojolya focuses on the production and the commercialization of the art of the back-strap loom. As the international market becomes more exacting, Cojolya has introduced a new line of products in the past three years to meet the demands of wider audiences. Through the diversification of products, Cojolya has found clients in various parts of the world.

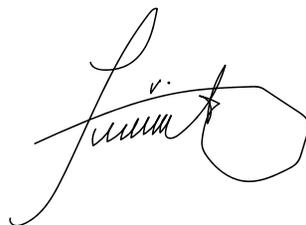
Our artisans are grand artists who did not have the opportunity for a formal education; nevertheless, they were trained by the greatest teachers, their grandmothers and their mothers. Thanks to the support of various international and professional designers, the weavers have been able to increase their skills and push the limits of the back-strap loom.

With the support of generous donors, we have been able to tremendously improve the communication and marketing of Cojolya's mission and its products. Our website (www.cojolya.org) and the online store (shop.cojolya.org) have been revamped, and we hope to attract more patrons, donors, and clients through this medium. As more learn about the mission of Cojolya, this opens up new possibilities for the association and its artisans.

Each year, we challenge ourselves to better the lives of the artisans; for this reason, Mano a Mano para el Desarrollo was created. This program is focused on community development workshops, education, and technical assistance aid for the artisans. Each of the three areas has the vision and the goal of positively impacting the lives of the artisans by promoting education of the children, forming a new generation of professional weavers within families of low-resources, reaching gender equality through community workshops, and respecting the rights of women and girls' rights to education. It's a very lofty goal, but with the support of our staff, artisans, volunteers, and donors, we know we will reach it!

A single page cannot begin to summarize the impact of Cojolya's work, nor describe how indispensable and important each donation and sale is for us. All we can say is that we are grateful and proud to be a non-profit Fair Trade Association.

Thank you so much for your support,



Carina Coché Vasquez
Executive Director



What We Do

Cojolya Association of Maya Women Weavers provides economic opportunities to artisans in the town of Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala through the traditional art of back-strap loom weaving.

Preserving Culture

For more than two thousand years, the skilled hands of Maya weavers have transformed threads into textiles – a tradition passed down by women from generation to generation. Today, back-strap loom weaving is a key Maya art form that has persisted intact despite social and political threats in the recent past and is reflected in the clothing, symbols, and customs of the region. Cojolya Association of Maya Women Weavers seeks to preserve this millennial tradition and the customs and culture that surround it, not as a historic relic but as an economically viable source of employment and income for the artisans in the association.



Josefa Pablo is able to preserve her culture and support her family through the tradition of back-strap loom weaving.

Economic Opportunity

Family and household responsibilities in Guatemala make a full eight-hour work day difficult for the members of the association, most of whom are wives and mothers. Our weavers can work the hours that are convenient for them and can practice their art in their homes, earning an income and maintaining their traditional routines.

Cojolya products are World Fair Trade Organization certified, meaning all artisans receive wages that are more than double what an average weaver would make by selling their products in local markets. By producing these practical pieces of art, women are able to not only keep their tradition and cultural values alive but are able to meet the needs of their families through their income.

As members of the association, weavers have access to materials, experienced global designers, and marketing services to sell their products on diverse markets -- from our shop in Santiago Atitlán and our online store to boutiques and specialty stores worldwide. Revenue from the sale of products produced by our artisans directly supports the association and social programs to assist the future development of community members in Santiago Atitlán.



Santiago Atitlán is known for its beautiful bird embroidery as seen on our Clutch Pájaro.

Community Development

Association members, their families, and the community are at the center of everything we do. To expand the association's impact, our community development program Mano a Mano para el Desarrollo is building strategies to assist the educational needs of the children of our artisans.

In Guatemala, students are required to attend school through 6th grade. But after 6th grade ends and secondary school begins enrollment rates drop significantly, especially in rural areas where the challenges of access and affordability arise. However, students who have a secondary education have much greater opportunities. Mano a Mano para el Desarrollo helps the children of our weavers stay in school by providing support, educational resources, and activities to keep them inspired for future opportunities.

This program also provides professional development for the members of our association and workshops on the principles of fair trade, gender equality, and empowerment. Cojolya is excited for the future of this community development program as it grows in 2017.



Our students gather for the first Mano a Mano meeting.

Our Impact

Preserving the Art of the Back-Strap Loom

Cojolya was founded in 1983 to preserve the art of the back-strap loom that was dying out due to systematic factors such as racism, undervaluation of work, and a changing economic structure. Antonio Ramírez, a co-founder, wanted to inspire the current and future generations to revalue the ancient traditions. Antonio recalls of a time when “the tradition was being forgotten, and it was dying.” As a tradition that is passed down orally, the back-strap loom is very susceptible to being lost to the annals of time.

By offering an economically viable source of income, Cojolya helps preserve the art of the back-strap loom. In the past, a woman would have to choose between earning a liveable wage or practicing her Tz’utujil culture. Now, a weaver can raise her family at home and simultaneously provide for them. We have seen this happen through the generations of weavers in the association. Although many of the founding artisans no longer work with Cojolya, their daughters and granddaughters have joined its ranks. In November, Cojolya gave a month long free course to 32 Tz’utujil students who never had the chance to learn weaving but wished to continue on their foremothers’ art.

Moreover, Cojolya serves as a source of inspiration for its own weavers and the community at large. Antonio speaks about the new creative color combinations that Maria Sosof, the master weaver, now uses in her shop which sells huipiles, Maya blouses. Throughout the town, her beautiful, on trend huipiles are seen on young women who choose to continue to wear their traditional traje, Maya clothing. Additionally, the success of the association has inspired other women in far-flung Tz’utujil communities to create their own groups.



Antonio Ramírez Co- Founder and Director of Production.

Antonio is proud of his and Cojolya’s work in the past year. “Our tradition comes from our ancestors, who learned it from their ancestors. Once [this generation] dies, who will keep it alive? Our grandchildren must.” As new, young members join the association each year, Cojolya ensures the longevity and the continuation of the back-strap loom.

Empowerment

In 2016, Cojolya refocused our attention to measuring our impact on the lives of the artisans, especially our women weavers. Without economic stability, there cannot be any empowerment or true freedom to choose -- and in Santiago Atitlán, economic stability for families is extremely scarce. On average, an agricultural worker earns around 40 Quetzales (approximately 5.50 USD) a day, and a woman could earn as little as 25 Quetzales (3.40 USD) for the same work. Even as weavers, women often are forced to sell their labor of many weeks for the equivalent of 1.36 USD a day. The low local prices prevent the weavers from viably living off their wages garnered from their traditional economies.

Cojolya seeks to disrupt this narrative by opening access to international markets, commercialization, and promising fair wages.

As a non-profit, 50% of the retail price of Cojolya product returns to the artisans who dyed, warped, wove, embroidered, and sewed the piece. The high rate of return ensures that those who made a piece profit the most from its sale. With this economic model, the artisans of Cojolya have been able to raise their families comfortably for two generations. Cojolya's success is evident through its expansion of the membership and the loyalty of its artisan families. From one weaver in 1983, Cojolya's membership has grown to include 30 artisans, of which 24 are women. Moreover, the majority of women comfortably work from their homes and to take care of their children simultaneously.

One of these women weavers is the inimitable Andrea Sicay Mesía. For more than sixteen years, Andrea has formed part of the Association. Due to her father's alcoholism and her mother's early death, Andrea took the role as the household head and raised her five siblings at the tender age of twenty. The economic strain forced her to leave school during elementary school and to find work. Her goal when she joined Cojolya was to guarantee a better life and education for her family. Today, Andrea is on the Board of Directors of Cojolya, where she advocates for the needs of the artisans and women in the community. Through Cojolya, she has not only improved her and her family's economic position, Andrea has also attended many workshops to learn about gender equality, fair wages, and the other principles of fair trade. Additionally, she has expanded her technical skills as a weaver and a dyer.

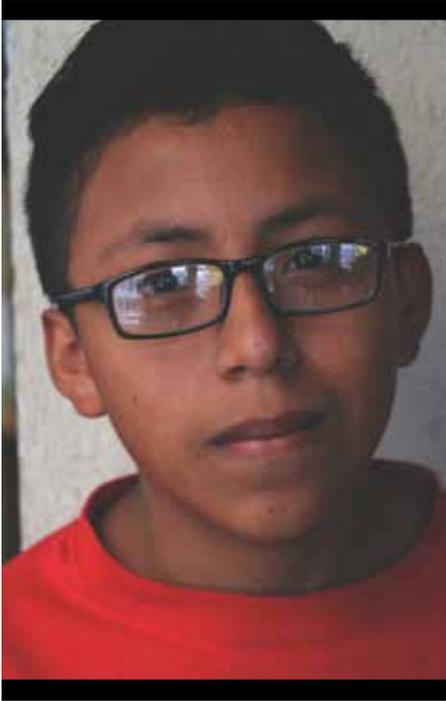
Although she only received a first grade education, Andrea's efforts and her salary at Cojolya has pushed four of her siblings through school. Currently, her salary supports the education of three of her siblings, José, Maribel, and Lourdes. She is especially proud of her brother who will graduate from high school in October.



Andrea Sicay Mesía at the urdimbre.

The Sicay Mesía family: José Santos, Maribel Isabel, Andrea and Lourdes.

Looking Forward



“My father and mother did not go to school because they didn’t have opportunity to do so,” José Miguel explained on a typical rainy afternoon in Santiago Atitlán. “This is because their parents, before them, did not go to school and weren’t able to give them that opportunity.”

José Miguel is a first generation middle schooler. He is quiet and pensive but you can see wisdom, hope, and excitement for his future in his eyes as he speaks. His older sister was the first in his family to attend 6th grade, but has since stopped going to school. José Miguel is now the first in his family to reach secondary school and truly enjoys learning.

“The thing I like about school is that every day when I go to school I learn something new and learn more,” says José Miguel.

When he needs help with his assignments, his family can help him come up with ideas but to do more is a challenge as his classes become more advanced. What’s more, his classes are taught in Spanish and while his parents know some Spanish they mainly speak the local language, Tz’utujil, at home.

When he grows up, he wants to be an accountant. José Miguel knows that he will have to dedicate a lot of his time to studying and will may even need a tutor to achieve this goal. He has a hard hill to climb to get there. And he’s not alone.

While enrollment in school up to 6th grade is required in Guatemala, the costs associated with school fees, school supplies, and other resources like computer and internet access are prohibitive for families earning an average of 40 Quetzales a day (approximately 5.50 USD.)

In Santiago Atitlán, the enrollment rate of students drops significantly from 75 percent of students attending primary school to just 24 percent of students attending the first years of secondary school, equivalent to junior high school. This rate drops even further to 5 percent for the higher levels of secondary education. José Miguel, for example, knows just two people who have graduated high school -- one is now a teacher and the other is the accountant who has inspired his future career goals.

Many of the children of our artisans, like José Miguel, are striving for more. Through our first educational support program, Mano a Mano para el Desarrollo, Cojolya will lend students a hand in reaching their goals. In March of 2017, Cojolya launched the program with an orientation welcoming the association members and children who wanted to enroll. Since then, Mano a Mano has expanded to include weekend art classes and monthly meetings with students to discuss their needs and provide guidance on how to succeed in school. The association also purchased two computers that students can use to study and do their homework while using free internet and free printers. To date, our enrolled children have collectively saved more

than the average monthly salary in computer use and printing.

For José Miguel, access to these resources is invaluable. He needs computer and internet access to complete assignments for his computer class, which began when he started secondary school. Before he could access the computers at Cojolya he had to pay to use these services at cafes and businesses just to do his homework. This meant asking his mother for 5 quetzales each time he needed to do work for just one class. Now, he can be seen studying in our office almost every day and can study for as long as he wants.

“Being able to use the computer is helpful for me but it’s even more helpful for my family,” he says, “I’m thankful that Cojolya has been able to help.”

Cojolya is currently building strategic plans to evaluate the needs of the families in our association, identify what students want most, and deliver these solutions. Students have mentioned the need for school supplies like pens, notebooks and dictionaries, and financial assistance for school fees, tutoring, and other resources. They have also expressed a desire to talk with successful members in their community about their career paths for inspiration and guidance. In 2017 and beyond, we look forward to finding the best ways to support the children of our association members and expand our impact into the community of Santiago Atitlán.



Maria considers her future at the first Mano a Mano orientation.



A typical photo of José Miguel studying at the Mano a Mano computer.

Supporters

Institutional Supporters

In May 2016, Individuell Människohjälp (IM) also known as the Swedish Development Partner began funding Cojolya under their Economic Empowerment of Women project in Central America. Through their support, we have been able to buy new looms and materials for the weavers, provide technical workshops to advance their skills in artisanry, host month long free summer classes for people in the community to learn how to weave on the back-strap loom, and start our program Mano a Mano para el Desarrollo. In 2017, our grant request was renewed, and now we are looking to expand our extant programs and projects. Since the start of the year, we have also partnered with them to develop a line of products mixing weaving and Humanium metal, a metal which is made from reformed guns.



Dolores Reanda practices a new weaving technique.

Through the GreaterGood grant, we were able to buy two ONIL stoves for the last of weavers who were still cooking on traditional wood burning stoves. The old ones were inefficient in the amount of wood they consumed, and the lack of proper chimneys meant that the smoke blew directly into the faces of the weavers during cooking. This posed a threat to the environment and the health of the weavers. We are proud to have closed the gap among all of our weavers' families.

Individual Donors

Celia Bowker
Agnel Danielle
Diane C. Dungey
Fernandez
Susan French
Céline Gairado
Martine Gairado
Meredith Henley
Abigail Koffler
Jean-Claude L'Huillery
Catherine LaCroix
Elizabeth LaCroix
Robert LaCroix
Lawrence Lee
Nicholas Lyon
Jorge Mangonnet
Mey
Ana Molina
Carlos Molina
Carlos Molina
José Molina
José Molina Ramírez
Millie Nishikawa
Lisa Sheaffer
Sheila Turnball
Raux



Juana Mendoza cooking at her new ONIL stove.

Association Members

Board of Directors, 2017-2019

Candis Ramírez, President | **Petronila Sapalu, Vice-President** | **José Sicay Mesía, Treasurer**
Brenda Mendoza, Secretary | **Andrea Sicay Mesía, Speaker #1** | **Magdalena Reanda Pacach, Speaker #2** | **Salvador Pablo, Speaker #3**



Antonio Ramírez - Founder and Director of Production



María Sosof - Master Weaver



Andrea Sicay Mesía - Weaver and Warper



Juana Chavajay - Weaver



Petrolina Sapalú - Weaver



Salvador Pablo - Tailor



Josefa Pablo - Weaver



Concepción Quevac - Weaver



María Tinay - Weaver



Catalina Quiejú - Weaver



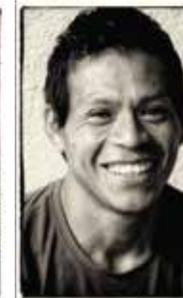
Juana Chavajay - Weaver



Dolores Quiejú - Weaver



Magdalena Reanda Pacach - Weaver



David Ramírez - Tailor



Dolores Quinac - Weaver



Rosario Ixtetelá - Weaver



Mercedes Petsey - Weaver



Magdalena Ixtetelá - Weaver



Antonio Quevac - Weaver



Concepción Damian - Weaver



Nicolasa Rujuch - Weaver



Juana Mendoza - Weaver



Andrea Reanda - Weaver



Candis Ramírez - Weaver



Ana Ixbalan - Weaver



Brenda Mendoza - Weaver



Tomás Sosof - Jaspé Dyer



Catarina Quiejú - Weaver

Volunteers/Staff

Antonio Ramírez,
Co-founder and Director of Production

Carina Coché Vasquez,
Executive Director

Ana Molina,
Communications
and Project Management
and Princeton in Latin
America, (July 2016
to August 2017)

Abigail Koffler,
Communications
and Project Management
and Princeton in Latin
America (July 2015
to July 2016)

Mariana Liberali,
Textile and
Accessories Designer
(January 2017 to
present),-

Noémie Pichon,
Textile and
Accessories Designer
(June 2016 to
November 2016)

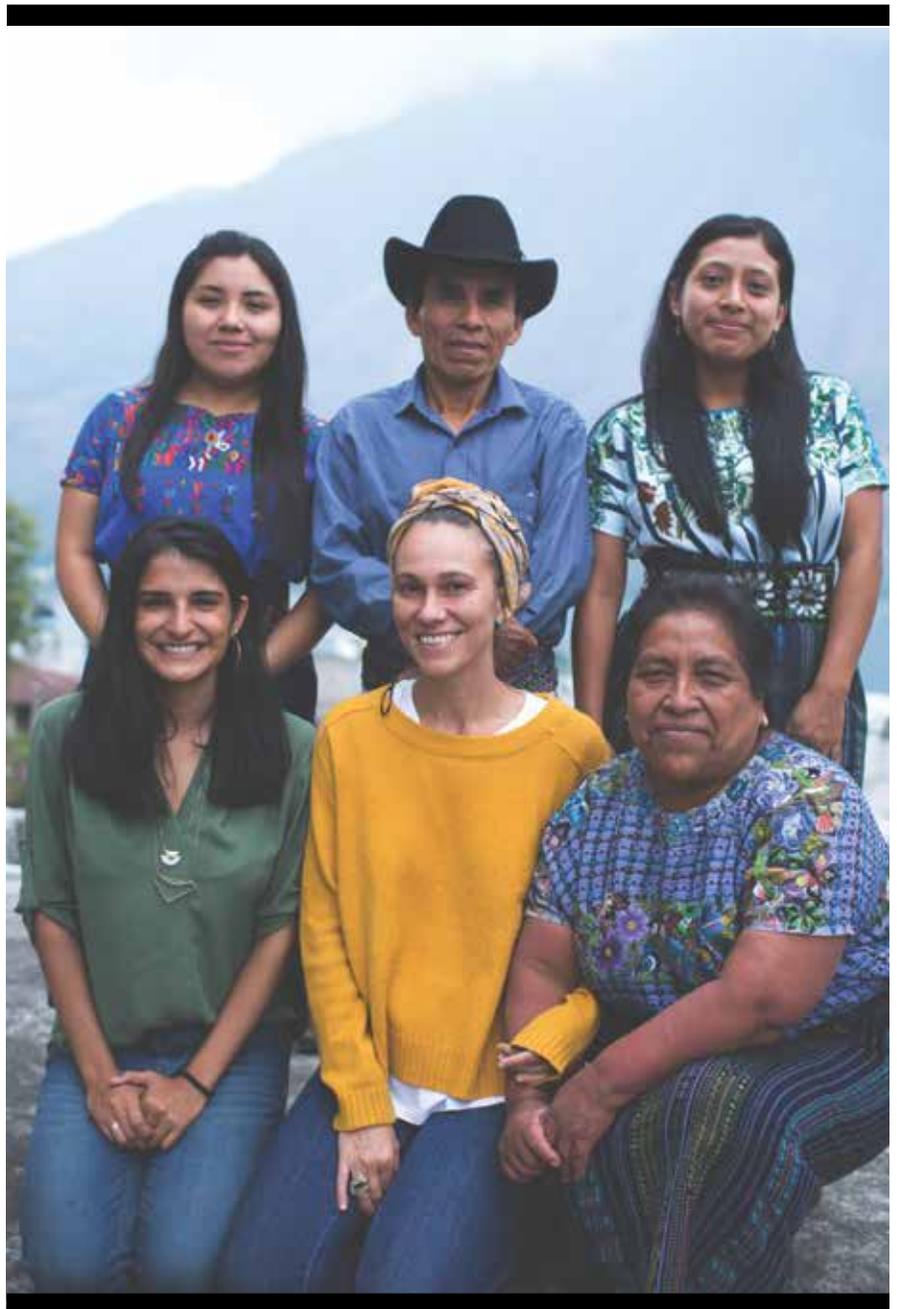
Maria Sosof, Master Weaver

Sara Coquix Ramírez,
Administrative Assistant

Cojolya Team June '17 :
Carina Coché Vasquez,
Antonio Ramírez,
Sara Coquix Ramirez,
Ana Molina,
Mariana Liberali and
Maria Sosof.
Photo by Anna Watts.

Interns and Volunteers

Aviva DeKornfield
Cecilia Rodrigues
Cesia Sosof Sapalu
Fabiola Petzey Sicay
Samantha McGinnis



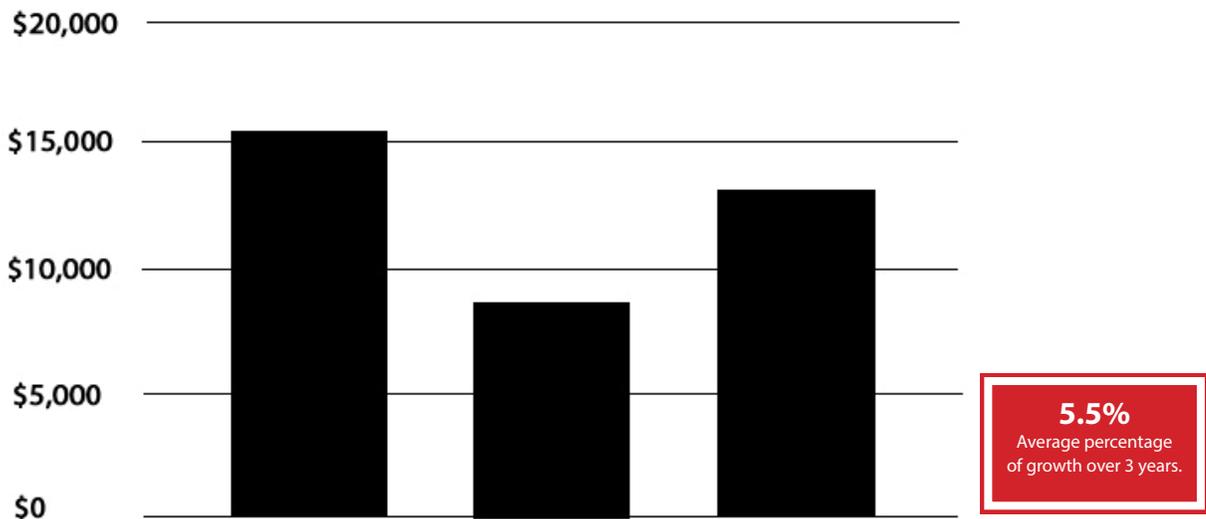
Financial Summary

Cojolya Association of Maya Women Weavers

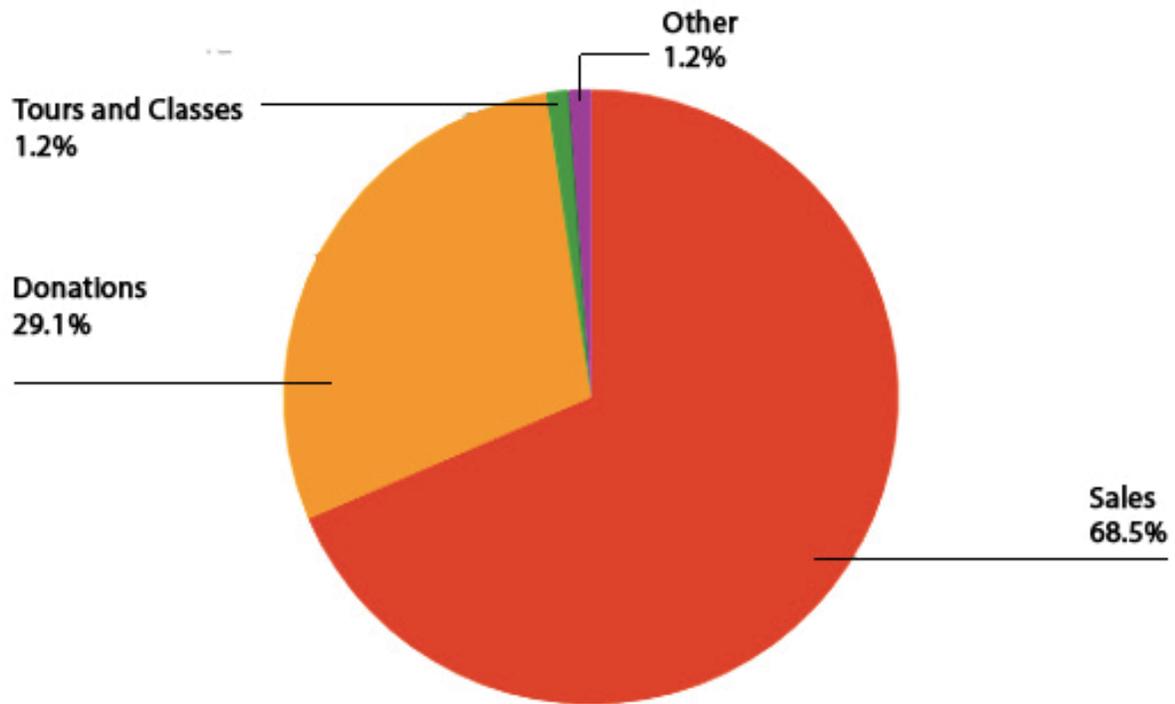
\$1= Q7.33

2016 Financial Summary		
	Q	\$
Capital	69,795.67	9,521.91
Revenue		
Sales	515,127.89	70,276.65
Donations	219,025.46	29,880.69
Tours and Classes	8,751.28	1,193.89
Other Income and Interest	8,653.26	1,180.52
Total Revenue	751,557.89	102,531.77
Total Revenue and Capital	821,353.56	112,053.69
Costs		
Program and Project Services	612,444.54	83,533.14
Administration	67,226.19	9,171.37
Taxes	27,400.64	3,738.15
Fundraising	0	0.00
Total Costs	707,071.37	96,628.86
Net Assets (Sales + Donations - Cost)	113,063.97	15,424.82

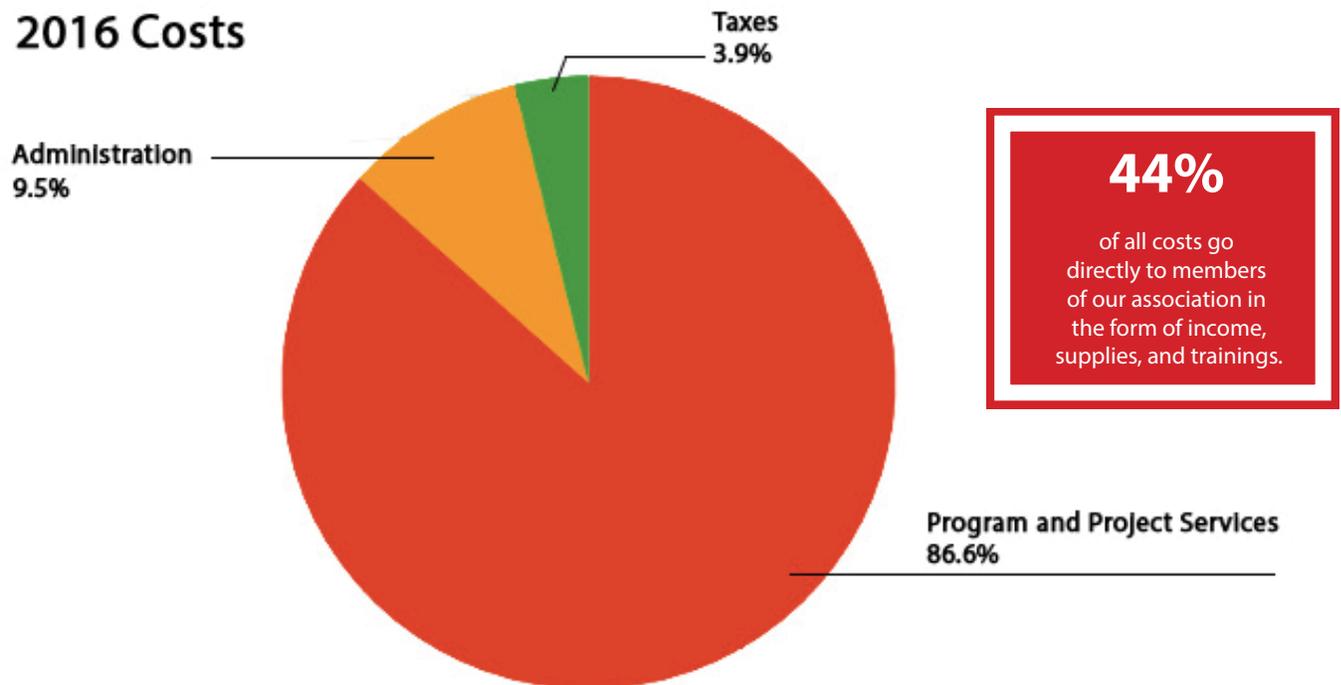
Net Asset Growth 2014, 2015, 2016: Cojolya Association of Maya Women Weavers



2016 Revenue



2016 Costs






Cojolya

ASOCIACION DE TEJEDORAS MAYAS

**MUSEO
& TIENDA**

PRESEVAR EL ARTE DEL TELAR DE CINTURA
TEXTILES HECHO A MANO
Y COMERCIO JUSTO

www.cojolya.org

cojolya@cojolya.org
Comercial Las Mascaras
Santiago Atitlán, Solola,
Guatemala
+502 7721 - 7268