

Creative Thoughts

Local artists working together to sustain a profession and passion

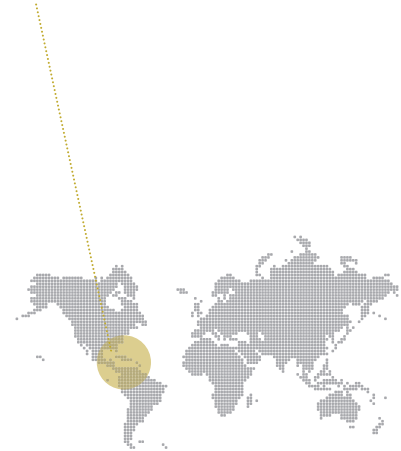
In Puerto Plata, as throughout the Dominican Republic, there is little connection between the locals and “locally” produced arts & crafts sold at the major travel resorts. Crafts available to tourists are primarily imported leaving little opportunity for local artisans to sell their work. With local livelihoods in mind, the Dominican Sustainable Tourism Alliance (DSTA) worked with local communities to develop a market for their products as well as a strategy for selling their art.

Housing 14 hotels, a convention center and a commercial district, Playa Dorada is the epicenter of tourism activity in the Puerto Plata region. In this area, the DSTA has facilitated the establishment of the Union of Artisans & Artists of Puerto Plata. In March 2009, coinciding with Carnival, the Union organized their first major exhibition selling locally produced crafts.

Over this two-day event, 16 members of the Union of Artisans & Artists earned \$400. To celebrate the opening, traditional Dominican music and folk dancers representing the “carnaval” heritage of the region preformed for tourists. Local artists were present and discussed with tourists how they made their products and explained the significance behind their work.

After this event the Union of Artisans & Artists of Puerto Plata was graciously received by the governance of Playa Dorada, who recognized the advantages of locally-made arts and handicrafts as well as the benefits it provides to the local community.

In preparation for this exhibition all 16 artists attended a DSTA-sponsored workshop that conveyed marketing strategies,



product presentation, display, selling and branding information to union members.

With a strong start, the Union of Artisans & Artists of Puerto Plata has doubled in size to 32 and is now moving towards becoming a self-sustaining community-based enterprise. With the technical support of DSTA experts, the artists hope to become self-sustaining, contributing to the economic growth and continued development of the Dominican Republic.

