



Georgia Employment and Infrastructure Initiative  
საქართველოს დასაქმებისა და ინფრასტრუქტურის ინიციატივა

# COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENTS

## Expanding International Markets for Georgian Artisans: The 2007 Santa Fe International Folk Art Market



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The Georgia Textile Group (GTG) participated in this year's 4th Annual Santa Fe International Folk Art Market, with support from the Crafts Center at CHF International and the Ramsay Merriam Fund. With over 20,000 attendees, the market is one of the highlights of the summer season in Santa Fe, known for its vibrant markets, including the Indian and Spanish markets. This year's Folk Art Market featured over 113 artists from 41 countries selected by a panel of expert jurors. The artists exhibited a diverse collection of arts and crafts including embroidery, felt work, beading, jewelry and textiles, clothing, leatherwork, wood carvings, paintings, pottery and more. The total amount of sales at the 2007 market exceeded \$1.3 million dollars over a period of two days.

Nino Kipshidze, the Executive Director of the GTG, attended the Folk Art Market on behalf of over 50 rural Georgian artisan groups. Ms. Kipshidze also participated in a 2-day intensive Training & Building Markets Program, funded by a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. In addition, the GTG was accepted to participate in the prestigious Trade Buyer's Showcase, which allows retailers to place large-quantity orders to participating vendors, thereby providing them with both work and income long after they have returned home to their countries. The Showcase, along with the Training & Building Markets Program, are key to the Market's goal of helping artists to achieve economic sustainability.

The GTG was established in 1993 as a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting the preservation and exhibition of traditional Georgian textiles. The GTG received technical assistance from CHF/Georgia via the United States Agency of International Development (USAID), which helped the group develop new designs and costing and pricing structures in preparation for the Santa Fe Folk Art Market. The GTG had an incredibly successful market, selling over \$12,000 in retail sales and receiving \$3,000 worth of wholesale orders from prominent retail stores in the United States, including the world-renowned Chicago Field Museum.



The Georgian textiles were extremely successful at the market, as they reflect the local traditional culture through their aesthetics, creativity, sense of color and simplicity. Even now, most Georgian artisans specializing in textiles are responsible for the entire production process, producing utilitarian, everyday items of clothing and household goods with modern appeal, as well as meaningful and sacred artifacts featuring highly technical and artistic skills. Georgian textiles include functional and decorative knitted, woven, embroidered, sewn, felted, printed and hand-dyed items.

Artisans who are a part of the GTG have learned to make folk textile art from their families, traditional museum pieces, and most of all, the GTG's trainings that focus on the revival and improvement of the art. Through its community work, the GTG encourages artisans to form local/regional associations as a tool to bring artisans together to learn and expand their market base. This has helped spread the techniques and skills involved in Georgian textile art while improving livelihoods for the textile artisans, their families and communities.

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