

2014 Artisan Hero: Nilda Callañaupa



Founder and Director of the Center for Traditional Textile of Cusco (CTTC), Nilda Callañaupa was born in Chinchero Village near Cusco, Peru. She began spinning wool from sheep and alpaca at the age of six and weaved her first patterns by age seven. Today, the CTTC reflects Nilda's remarkable work in the quality of the textiles that it produces as well as its emphasis on traditional designs and techniques.

The CTTC employs 650 weavers and has thousands of beneficiaries. It has a strong tradition of integrating symbolism from nature into its work, returning to ancient techniques that were once in danger of extinction to harness a symbol of regional pride.

Beyond the work of safeguarding culture, Nilda has also worked tirelessly to assist families to create a larger market for their textiles and a new economy for their communities. One outstanding example is Maribel Quispe, a weaver in Lima. Nilda was able to empower young women like Maribel to return to the CTTC community after pursuing her academic studies. Studies indicate that education within the artisan community has led a rise in indigenous women who recognize their right in demanding dignity and equity in their work.

When the Alliance visited Nilda in Peru earlier this summer, she brought us on a tour of Sallac, a guild of 50 weavers of the CTTC located in a mountain village an hour outside of Cusco. Nilda was conducting an alpaca wool dyeing workshop using only natural dyes. The CTTC has made a point not to use synthetic dyes, which, although popular in Peruvian weaving, has been found to have harmful environmental impacts. Nilda told us that "damage to earth is inspiration to take action and to position artisans in social and economic spaces". Indeed, Nilda's efforts have inspired and created both social and economic impact, and for that the Alliance is proud to award her as the 2014 Artisan Hero.