

Aida, Tin Craft Artisan, Oaxaca, Mexico

by Sofia Trevino

Aida is 40 years old. Although she holds a Bachelors degree in Business Administration, she was been working with her husband in making tin handicrafts for a few decades now.



Aida's husband at work.

Photo by Sofia Trevino.

Her husband's hands can tell the story of hard work, creativity and persistence. With the help of their 3 children and Aurora, a university student who rents a room from them and helps the family paint the tin crafts, they were getting ahead, selling their products in Oaxaca and working on some orders they received from exporters. Aida is now suffering as a mother because Alan, the oldest of her children, has moved far away to attend university, and Aurora is moving to continue her practice in a different town. The business will also reflect this loss from family help, the expenses for Alan's education, and the revenues Aurora brought as a tenant. They were able to hire two people to help in the workshop, who would stay with them the whole day, they feed them breakfast and lunch. Oaxaca is heavily dependent on foreign tourism. Since the swine flu outbreak and the economic crisis, many stores have closed down and there are no sales or tourism in the city. "There are other vendors selling in the few remaining stores at very low prices. They were probably working abroad before, saving money so they could come back here and start a business." In the last 6 months, materials (such as tin, paint, thinner, lacquer, brushes, paintbrushes, gas welding, packaging) have become

more expensive but the products sell at the same price. “We have to worry about payment to employees, paying the bills such as electricity and telephone. We pay more for the telephone service as we need to call clients because they don’t pay, and we have to keep reminding them. For example, the government’s museum hasn’t issued our payment for three months and we are calling them everyday to get information. We also need to pay more for electricity as we work until very late at night. We have made more tin models, with the hope of having good sales. Sometimes I think our employees are the ones making the gains, because they do not buy equipment, or pay for the costs of producing the crafts, and yet, they earn a salary for their work without spending money on anything else. We haven’t seen any gains as our gains are currently stored as pieces of tin crafts and we have the hope that one day a client will take them and we’ll get some money.”