

Margaret Ahmed creates jobs, hope in Nigeria

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When Margaret Ahmed walks around her hometown of Jos, Nigeria, observing seeds on the ground or plastic bags littering the streets, she sees potential merchandise.

Plants can create natural beauty products, seeds can be beads for jewelry, and plastic bags can be woven into purses, carry bags, and mats. Scraps of cloth turn into beautiful table runners.

Ahmed is the executive director and founder of Home Makers Women Development Initiative, which includes 26 groups in Nigeria, Niger, and Cameroon, with an average of 71 women per group. Christian and Muslim women learn business and money management skills as well as conflict mitigation and mediation.

Ahmed also has been teaching similar skills to youth struggling with drug addictions and to women who sought refuge in Jos after being forced from northern Nigeria by Boko Haram extremists.

The time spent with people coming from similar experiences also provides an informal kind of therapy.

“The needs of these women will only keep increasing,” she said. “So you need something to help you make an income so you can meet those needs. You need something to do to give hope.”

Home Makers’ newest project, Weave of Hope, involves collecting single-serving plastic water bags, used like water bottles and thrown away (see above), to make purses, wallets, and other items.

Pam Shedrach, who was battling a 15-year addiction, has been involved in the weaving program from its inception in 2015. The work helped him stop doing drugs in part by keeping him busy.

“We started collecting used pure water bags with her; it was such a difficult and degrading task,” he said. “Washing, cutting, drying, sewing, weaving them takes real time. But she will not give up.” —[Mennonite Central Committee](#) staff

