

The Cooperative of Sweaters



Emily & Peter Gladhart in 2000

without realizing the impact they had left in the community. At the time of their departure, the 40 members of the Cooperative were producing around 200 and 300 sweaters per month.

However, when the couple left the textile industry increased. The Cooperative participated in the Artisans Fair in Colombia, resulting in the exporters knocking on the doors of this community. Suddenly, the demand for the sweaters raised from dozens to thousands per month.

At the end of the 70s, Emily got in touch with the president of the Cooperative who told her that an article that appeared in the newspaper "El Comercio" reported that there were more than 4,000 wool-weavers and the community had been transformed.

Emily couldn't believe it until she saw with her own eyes. In 1979, the Gladharts returned and discovered that more than 1,000 families in the Carchi and Imbabura provinces produced around 6,000 sweaters monthly and between 50% and 75% of that production was exported to other continents. Just in Mira, 350 women who belonged to the 500 families in the community were engaged in the textile industry. From this group, 50 women had started their own businesses employing between 1 and 30 weavers.

Emily and Peter observed that parents, who at one time didn't have enough money to send their children to school, now had their children studying at boarding schools in the city of Quito. Women who didn't have enough money to go to the dentist came to have dental hygiene.

All members of the community wore shoes. Some members of the Cooperative had received bank loans and employed other women. The four automobiles that existed in town during their service had been multiplied. People greeted them warmly. The only one who was not happy to see them was the town moneylender. Emily and Peter had put him out of business.