

When Craft Becomes Connection

Craft & Skill | Practices



When Craft Becomes Connection Practices

A *puse-puse* becomes more than a bag. It becomes proof that when women are supported through culture, the impact travels far beyond the village.

Some of you may recall that we introduced the Motuan *puse-puse* as a corporate gift for our clients. At the time, it felt like a simple idea - thoughtful, local, and practical. What we didn't fully anticipate was just how far that gesture would travel, or how deeply it would resonate.

These *puse-puse* weren't sourced from a catalogue or assembled in a factory. They were sewn by three village women from Hanuabada and Elevala, right there in the village. Hands that know their craft. Hands that carry generations of knowledge, stitched into every seam.

The materials themselves were *LAVAGIRL* branded, purchased from the inspiring Annette Sete and shipped from Kokopo, another woman-led story woven into the final product. Even the gift cards were printed locally, by D-TEN, a small SME printer based in Hanuabada. Every part of the process stayed close to home.

What made the gift unique, though, was what lay beyond the surface.

Each card carried a QR code. When scanned, it led the recipient to a landing page explaining the meaning of the gift the Motuan heritage behind the *puse-puse*, the symbolism in the PNG designs, and the people who brought it to life. It turned a simple object into a story, and a story into a connection.

Recently, I received a surprise message from a client in Sydney. A belated thank-you note - and as they say, it's never too late to thank someone.

Her words stopped me in my tracks.

"It's a precious gift with a personal connection which brought me joy when it arrived, and continues to do so daily. The fact that it supports local female artisans makes it especially meaningful given the work I do with WIPO in their Women's Entrepreneurial Program for local and indigenous communities. Tangible support, such as you gifting the *puse-puse*, ensures such projects survive."

Reading that, I was reminded why cultural crafts matter - especially for women.

For the women who made the *puse-puse*, this wasn't just sewing. It was income. Dignity. Recognition. A chance to contribute using skills they already possess, in ways that honour who they are and where they come from. Cultural craft becomes economic participation, without asking women to abandon their identity to do so.

For the recipient, the gift wasn't just beautiful, it was meaningful. It carried values. It aligned with her work. It told her that behind the object was a network of women supporting women, across villages, provinces, and even borders.

This experience has stayed with me. It has reinforced something I've always believed: cultural crafts are not relics of the past. They are tools for the present. When done thoughtfully, they create livelihoods, preserve culture, and build bridges between the local and the global.

Personally, it has empowered me to do more, to involve more local women in work that is often corporate and international in nature. Because there is no reason the two worlds cannot meet. In fact, when they do, something powerful happens.

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