



Dining for Women

Program Fact Sheet

PROGRAM: BeadforLife

WEBSITE: <http://www.beadforlife.org>

MISSION: *BeadforLife (BFL) creates sustainable opportunities for women to lift their families out of extreme poverty by connecting people worldwide in a circle of exchange that enriches everyone.*

WHY THIS ISSUE IS SO IMPORTANT: There is a burden of three sorrows that afflict Uganda's people: (1) the *AIDS epidemic* that has already killed over a million people and orphaned over a million children; (2) a *war* in Northern Uganda persisting for 20 years and forcing a million and a half people to flee their homes, who are now living in filthy camps, slums or other parts of the country; and (3) *extreme poverty* affecting over three-quarters of the population. In Uganda, over 80% of the people survive on less than a dollar a day.

BeadforLife provides opportunities for a better life, allowing Ugandan's to lift their families out of poverty. [Ugandan women](#) (many are HIV positive, widowed or internally displaced) turn colorful recycled paper into beautiful [bead jewelry](#) and people who care open their hearts, homes and communities to buy and sell the beads. The beads become income, food, medicine, school fees and hope. <http://www.beadforlife.org/3ourwork.html> (Please visit the BeadforLife website for bead photos)

BEADFORLIFE'S STORY: BFL began through a chance encounter between a woman sitting near her mud home and BFL's founders; Torkin, Ginny and Devin. They learned there was no market for her beads and that the woman worked for a dollar a day in a rock quarry. They admired her paper beads and bought a few. Soon, friends began admiring the beads and they realized there might be a market for them. Classes were held to improve bead quality and to develop different styles of necklaces and bracelets. The first group of beaders enrolled, all from the Acholi tribe living in the slums of Kampala and internally displaced from the war in Northern Uganda.

In America, people loved the beads, but even more they loved the stories of the intelligent, courageous Ugandan women working hard to earn an income. By 2004, BFL applied for nonprofit status and began developing its unique program of citizen participation to eradicate poverty. A BeadCircle of support allowed BFL to expand programs into Community Development and to broaden its reach to impoverished Ugandans.

WHERE THEY SERVE: BeadsforLife works to eradicate poverty in *Uganda*, and to educate North Americans (and others in the developed world) to participate in fighting extreme poverty worldwide.

COUNTRY AT A GLANCE: *UGANDA*

Since gaining independence in 1962, Uganda has rebounded from the abyss of civil war and economic catastrophe to become relatively peaceful, stable and prosperous. Yet the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in the north remain blighted by one of Africa's most brutal rebellions. In the 1970s and 1980s, Uganda was notorious for its human rights abuses when up to half a million people were killed in state-sponsored violence, first during the military dictatorship of Idi Amin and then after the return to power of Milton Obote. The cult-like Lord was notorious for its human rights abuses when up to half a million people were killed in state-sponsored violence, first during the military dictatorship of Idi Amin and then after the return to power of



was notorious for its human rights abuses when up to half a million people were killed in state-sponsored violence, first during the military dictatorship of Idi Amin and then after the return to power of Milton Obote. The cult-like Lord's Resistance Army has perpetrated massacres and mutilations in northern Uganda for 19 years, displacing more than 1.6 million people, including 20,000 children according to UN estimates. The LRA and government signed a permanent cease-fire in February 2008.



During the 1990s, the government of President Museveni coordinated credible elections, reduced abuses by the army and police, and substantially improved human rights. Western-backed economic reforms produced solid growth and reduced inflation in the 1990s. Uganda has won praise for its vigorous campaign against HIV/AIDS that has helped to reduce its prevalence - which reached 30% in the 1990s - to single-digit figures. The risk of other infectious diseases is still very high and life expectancy only averages 52 years. Coffee is the country's main export and its price dramatically affects Uganda's economic health.

- ❖ The Republic of Uganda is a landlocked country in East Africa
- ❖ Uganda is about the size of Oregon
- ❖ Population is 31,367,972
- ❖ Environmental issues include draining of wetlands for agricultural use, deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, water hyacinth infestation in Lake Victoria and widespread poaching
- ❖ Natural resources abound including fertile soil, regular rainfall, mineral deposits of copper, gold, and cobalt
- ❖ Agriculture is the most important sector of the economy. Coffee accounts for the bulk of exports

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS: The core of BeadforLife's program is income generation, putting money directly into the hands of women. The fundamental goal is to have members become independent and self-sustaining within 27 months. Members are selected based on need, working with the poorest of the poor with the greatest need *and* the greatest desire to get out of poverty. They are trained to roll beads and make jewelry and begin to earn a steady income. In the first month they open savings accounts. Money also goes into a business fund. They receive health care education, family planning, and mosquito nets. About the sixth month, members attend an entrepreneurial training course and begin a business plan. They may also save money to build a house in Friendship Village, a BeadforLife project to provide affordable housing, or to save towards housing in a location of their choice. Members launch their small businesses after receiving the money in their business fund. Many members have as many as three small businesses providing a steady income stream. By the time members graduate from BeadforLife they have started a small business or received vocational training and are ready to be on their own. New members are enrolled twice a year. Beaders are paid fair trade prices. (See BeadforLife website for a detailed program diagram)

BeadforLife has a holistic approach to poverty eradication. All net profits from BFL are invested in [community development projects](#) that help people work their way out of poverty including entrepreneurial development and small business funding, youth vocational training, affordable housing and health programs. BeadforLife has a [Grants Program](#) to assist other non-profit groups doing poverty eradication work. Through these collaborations they expand their capacity to affect extreme poverty.

WHAT DFW DONATIONS WILL SUPPORT: Our collective gifts will directly support the groups of beaders.

HOW PROGRAM SUCCESS IS MEASURED: BeadforLife believes in the value of rigorous and ongoing evaluation to measure the impact of programs and guide new program development.

Some of the indicators used to measure program success include:

- Number of beaders (over 660 beaders), graduating 150 members into self-sufficiency
- Quality of life indicators (surveys, testimonials, evaluations) For instance, 85% of respondents opened a business, built a home or did both during their BFL membership. 99% of members said life has improved since joining BFL. And, the percentage of families sharing a latrine with 10 or more families decreased from 50% in 2005, to 6% today.

- Average income generated by beaders (most were living on less than \$30 -\$50 per month before BFL, and following the program earned \$227 per month – equivalent to the average salary of a Ugandan teacher)
- Number of bead orders, online, phoned and in stores. Volunteers hosted over 5,000 BeadParties, reaching over 97,000 people worldwide
- Number of retail partners
- Number of supporters and amount of donations
- Been featured in top media including *NBC*, *O* magazine, *African Woman* and *Family Circle*

FINANCIAL PROFILE: In 2007, BeadforLife spent \$1,222,276 on program expenses; 89% of the organization’s total expenses. They directed \$154,139, only 11% of expenditures, to fundraising and administration.

DFW GIVING HISTORY WITH PROGRAM: *New program*

SOURCES:

- <http://beadforlife.org>
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uganda>
- http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2003/indicator/pdf/hdr03_table_MDG1.pdf
- http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1069166.stm
- <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ug.html>

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