

Lugazi Ladies

Project Update June 2009



Varnishing the hand rolled paper beads in the Lugazi workshop.



Lydia and Jane sorting through necklaces prior to packaging.



Prosper Margaret rolling the paper beads in Lugazi, Uganda.



Patience has been able to go to school since her mother started making beads with the Necklace Project.

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May 22, 2009

Dear Village Care Supporter:

I am writing this letter on behalf of Village Care International, Inc. to thank you for supporting the Lugazi Ladies Necklace Project. If you are receiving this letter you have either purchased necklaces from us or have donated to the project's general fund. We sincerely thank you for your contribution as this year's success is a direct result of your generosity.

I'd like to take this opportunity to share what we've accomplished with your help so far in 2009. I'd also like you to meet two of the women who are making necklaces and have benefited from your purchase or donation.

As you already know the Lugazi Ladies make necklaces from hand rolled paper beads in Uganda. The necklaces are beautiful and every single one is unique. More important is the story behind these necklaces—the story of a successful fight against poverty. Village Care's goal is to support these women in a way that creates real business for them while also providing for crucial investment in the local economy in Uganda.

This year our most exciting step forward has been our movement toward working with retail stores throughout California. Our necklaces can now be found in Santa Cruz, Mendocino, and Sonoma. We are negotiating with a number of small businesses that would like to sell our necklaces. If things keep moving as they have been I hope to be in at least 20 stores by December 2009.

The Lugazi Ladies started out with just 5 women, the 'pioneers' as they like to call themselves. Since then the demand for necklaces has caused the group to grow to 22 members. The women send the necklaces to the US using Village Care volunteers who in turn sell the necklaces through at their place of work, to friends and family and via retail stores.

This year alone we have been able to deposit more than \$3,500 into the bank account of the Lugazi Ladies. While this may seem like a modest amount, in a country where the average person makes \$300/year this is very exciting. The women have used the money to invest in local income generating projects, ranging from pig farming to wedding dress rentals.

Thanks to generous donations, Village Care has been able to purchase supplies including necklaces stands, merchandise bags, packaging materials and marketing postcards to aid in selling our necklaces to stores and at craft fairs.

It is truly exciting to see the women in Uganda use their profits not just for their own salary but to improve their local community. In February 2009, the Lugazi Ladies decided to call themselves 'Bwavu Mpologoma', which is a Ugandan proverb that means "Poverty is like a lion, you must fight

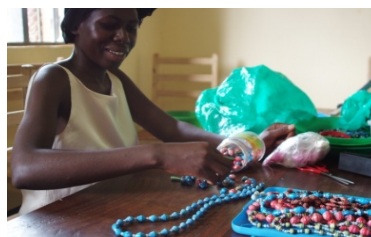
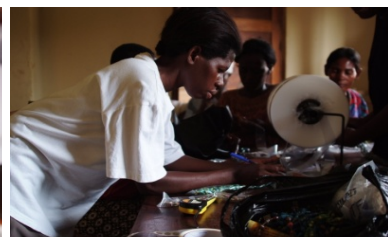


Left: Lydia has been making necklaces for over a year with the necklace project. Here she is pictured in her one room home where she lives with her two children.

Bottom left: Lydia started her own small business with the necklace profits. Pictured is one of the weddings that Lydia decorated.

Bottom center: Lydia working on packaging necklaces.

Bottom right: Lydia is working on designing necklaces with the paper beads.



it before it kills you". These women have been struggling in the fight against poverty, and Village Care continues to contribute to their success.

There are two stories in particular that I would like to share with you—Lydia and Harriet.

Lydia, pictured on the previous page and to the left is a single mother of two who separated from her abusive husband a few years ago. She came to Lugazi with no funds and has struggled to make ends meet.



Lydia showing off her wedding dress. She purchased this dress to rent out to other brides as a source of income.

Lydia is an entrepreneur. When she first moved to Lugazi she decorated weddings and helped bake wedding cakes to earn money. This did not provide enough income for her children to go to school. Lydia joined the necklace project in December 2008 and since then she has saved enough to add on to her wedding decoration business; she was able to purchase a wedding dress to rent out to local brides.

Lydia is able to fight poverty by working hard, saving her money and investing. Village Care supports this type of entrepreneurship and is excited to share her success.

Access to the US market through VCI has allowed her to have the funds to invest in local business, providing the pathway out of poverty for her and her family. She can now afford healthy meals for education



Above: This is Harriet, sitting in her one bedroom home. Before she contracted HIV, she was a laboratory technician. She is happy to have a job that is not too strenuous.

Far Left: Harriet standing outside of her home in Lugazi.

Left: Rebecca, Kari, and Harriet outside of Harriet's home in Lugazi.

for her children.

The second woman I would like to tell you about is Harriet (pictured above). Harriet is HIV positive and like Lydia is a single mother of two. Her husband died of AIDS a few years ago after which she was banished from her families' home. Since she was abandoned by her family and her community, she has struggled to pay for rent and food. She has a very difficult time taking her antiretroviral drugs because she cannot afford the food that needs to accompany her medication. Harriet does not hide her status and so it has been nearly impossible for her to find a job. Her skin is rough from the HIV medication, and when people see this, they will not hire her.

Harriet is a serious woman that is willing to work hard, she joined the necklace project in February 2008. She is happy to have found a job that is not too strenuous and a group of women that accepts her as their friend. Most of all, she says she is relieved that she does not have to rely on the sympathy of others.

Women like Harriet and Lydia find a place of refuge in the Village Care necklace project. The work space is safe and clean and the women are accepting and loving. They care for each other as a community. It is a place where the disabled, elderly, and HIV+ women are welcome. The support that these ladies find amongst this group is the most important part of the Lugazi Necklace Project. This is a business with a purpose and these women are truly exceptional people.



Jane, president of Bwavu Mpologoma (left) and Mary, one of the necklace designers (right), hanging the paper beads to dry after varnishing.

Village Care would like to sincerely thank you for your contribution to this project. It is because of supporters like you that this is possible. There are a few ways you can support us further:

- You can donate to our necklace fund. (Please write "Necklace fund" on your check. Donations are tax deductible.)
- You can donate to our general fund to allow us to start new projects and do more Village Care Trainings throughout Africa. Donations are tax deductible.
- You can sell the necklaces in your place of business. If you own a retail store or an office you can set up a necklace stand and sell the necklaces. You can buy a starter kit that includes a necklace stand, postcards, merchandise bags, and 20 assorted necklaces for \$232 (this includes shipping).
- Tell your friends (especially friends that own retail stores!) about our necklace project.
- Tell us about craft fairs or events that you know of in your area. E-mail necklaces@villagecare.com.
- Of course, you can buy the necklaces yourself! They are for sale at our Auburn office.

If you have any questions about the Lugazi Ladies Necklace Project or are interested in selling the necklaces at yourself, please do not hesitate to call or e-mail me. Thank you for your continuous and generous support of Village Care International, Inc..

Sincerely,

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You can make a difference.

