

Outreach Uganda is on a New Mission – Making Land Ownership a Reality for the Women of Uganda

A group of women collectively sit outside a lone dwelling made from mostly cardboard and dirt. Their capable fingers work quickly as they roll glossy strips of paper into what will become handcrafted beads for sale all around the world. Known for their brightly colored necklaces, bracelets, and earrings, perhaps you have even seen their crafts for sale at a location near you. Indicative of the culture, the designs have led to the beader group established by Outreach Uganda, a 501c non-profit organization founded by Carol Davis in 2007, when she saw a need to help these women find a way out of the poverty stricken conditions they were living within.

Overcoming Poverty Starts with Land Ownership

Headquartered in Denver, Colorado, the non-profit began with just a single beader village, and now recognizes over 200 members in the regions of Kitgum, Lamwo, and Jinja, in a sub-Saharan African country the size of Oregon. From Denver to Uganda, Outreach Uganda has helped these women realize their potential and a growing income. Ultimately, their handicraft has served as recognition for their plight, while helping to reduce poverty and improve lives, especially in the areas of education, women's empowerment, and self-sufficiency through job creation. But colorful beads are just the beginning for these women who see a future bright with possibilities. While the African bead makers continue to prosper and even start small businesses of their own, Outreach Uganda is working to help them do even more; acquire land ownership so they can build self-sustaining communities.

To fully understand the impact a property acquisition would have on these women, one must go back to the days of the 20 year war in the northern region which only ended in late 2008. Many women were forced out of their homes, losing loved ones, ancestral lands and any hope of having their own home much less earning a supplemental income. As a result, some migrated to southern Uganda where poverty conditions endured, lives succumbed, and hope was lost. Land is not so easily acquired when

you lack the means and emotional strength to afford it. In Jinja especially, a densely populated area with a daytime population of 200,000, the price of parcels is costly.

A Push for Self-Sustaining Communities

To date, there has only been about five such housing projects in Uganda, most of which began five to ten years ago and are unable to support the growing population. Outreach Uganda therefore foresees a growing humanitarian need to help these women obtain sizeable acreage upon which to build modest size homes. The plan is to start in Jinja where the dense population and continued migration from rural areas to the city has made land acquisition difficult for men and almost impossible for women.

The non-profit organization has so far secured some of the funding so they can buy up to five acres upon which to build homes for these women and their families. But more donations are still needed, so the 70 women beaders of the Jinja group can look forward to transitioning from the slums, where there is no running water or electricity, not to mention cramped one-room rented dwellings, and many illnesses.

Once the land has been acquired, there are no stopping supporters and volunteers willing to contribute supplies and labor in order to build, with microloans helping with the lending process. In all, the Jinja women beaders have voted to build mostly one story structures, with perhaps the possibility of a small building for community needs, and a garden area for growing vegetables. This opportunity will literally transform the lives of over 120 women and children, who struggle with safety issues, and go hungry while living in such dismal conditions.

Considering up to 15 percent of the Jinja group women are HIV positive, and most have been widowed at some point in their lives, they are a needy group supporting many orphans. Moving

forward, the hope is for a ripple effect to take shape, enabling families to thrive, jobs to grow, and living conditions to vastly improve.

The beaders have made great strides in the past 6 years. They dress better, eat better, can afford some medicines, and send their children to at least primary school. But to propel themselves out of poverty forever, they need out of the unhealthy living conditions where they continue to be immersed in a very negative environment that holds them back. It's hard to imagine a life where one cannot envision choices, dreams, or opportunity. Through Outreach Uganda, however, one small group is making a global impact.

Together, We Can Change the World

Outreach Uganda welcomes your support.

- Make a tax deductible donation through Global Giving at:
<http://www.globalgiving.org/projects/help-120-uganda-women-move-from-the-slum-to-a-home/>.
- Or online at: <http://outreachuganda.org/how-to-help/donate>
- Mail a donation to:

Outreach Uganda.
9457 S. University Blvd #410
Highlands Ranch, CO 80126
- Volunteer at: <http://outreachuganda.org/how-to-help/volunteer>