

Meet the Beaders



Lalam Agnes has a huge smile and playful personality despite the difficulties in her life. Her husband was a soldier killed in the war in Northern Uganda, leaving Agnes widowed at age 27. Agnes particularly mourns the fact that she never saw where he was buried.

Agnes fled her village in the North, and settled in a Kampala slum. She is the primary caregiver for six children, all living in one small but clean room.

Agnes tested positive for HIV test in 2003 but was not getting care. When she joined BFL, she was supporting herself by making homemade gin.

Today: Agnes supports her family by making beads. Agnes has also been able to meet her dream of owning a small business so that "If I die my children will be okay." She started a small store with some of her savings and is on the road out of poverty forever.

Jajja (Grandmother) Namutebi Josephine has had a difficult life. She had eight children, but six of them died of AIDS as adults. She now raises four grandchildren, three of whom contracted HIV from their parents.



Jajja's husband had cancer and his leg has been amputated, so he can't do much work. Jajja supported her extended family by working as a day laborer tilling people's fields for planting.

Today: Jajja Josephine supports her whole family by rolling beads. Although she is the oldest beader, Jajja is the life of the party and, whenever there is singing, she is out there dancing, smiling, and enjoying life.

Jajja no longer tills fields, and instead gathers with neighbors and rolls colorful beads. She is now able to feed her family three meals a day and to send all of her grandchildren to school. She dreams of moving out of Kampala and building a house where she will have a bit of land and can plant her own garden.

Mary Naiga contracted AIDS through her husband, who died several years ago leaving her, at age 25, with four small children. She lived in a 4-by-7 foot mud hut, earning enough income for only a single meal, often feeding the children but not herself.



Mary had access to life-saving AIDS drugs, but decided not to take them because they increase one's appetite.

Since joining BeadforLife: Mary has become one of the most industrious beaders. She rolls beautiful beads, and also started a bead-supply business selling to other beaders. Because of her stable income, Mary started taking the AIDS drugs, and her health has improved dramatically.

Mary has also managed to put money into savings each month, and has saved over \$600 to build her own home.



Aduna Alice came to the BeadforLife office hoping get some food. She and her two sons were slowly starving. That day, Alice washed the dishes in exchange for about \$6.

Then her whole story came out. Alice had been widowed for two years since her husband died of AIDS, leaving her no income. She lived in a one-room mud house. Both she and her older son were HIV+ and sick. Alice was getting care, but her son was not, so BeadforLife helped enroll him in an HIV program for children, and he was put on life-saving medications.

Alice soon learned how to roll beads. When she made her first sale, she fell to her knees, tears streaming down her face. "Is this money really mine? All of it? God is good!" She had earned \$18: The largest amount of money she had ever made in her lifetime.

Now: Alice makes about \$80 a month rolling beads. She is paying rent regularly, eating three meals a day, and has enrolled her boys in school. Alice now believes that she will live to see both of her sons grow to be adults.