beading for life

Empowering Indigenous Maasai Women
The Maasai people have lived in the lands now known as East Africa for thousands of years. As pastoralists, the Maasai livelihood revolves around their cattle, goats and sheep. Since the period of colonialism, they have faced social exclusion and marginalisation, which has led to many living in poverty and having to resort to searching for alternative forms of income.

The main activities of Maasai women revolve around the home; looking after the children, milking the livestock, selling milk, fetching water and gathering firewood. Having no direct rights to land or livestock leaves them with little control over income and heavily dependent on their husbands.

One of the things which defines the Maasai people is the way they have valiantly fought to maintain their culture and identity. Beaded jewelry is an integral part of their culture and Maasai women take great pride in their skills in beading. Now, they believe that it is time to share it with the world.
What are beaded products?

The range of products do not stop at just jewellery: from necklaces, bracelets and earrings to Christmas tree decorations, placemats and belts. They are capable of beading almost anything and are open to design requests.
Undeniably, life is becoming more difficult for the Maasai. Men and women no longer find traditional means of livelihood sufficient to maintain their lives. The women, apart from selling milk, had to resort to selling charcoal by burning the trees in the local forest. This provides a short term solution and gives them quick cash but it is neither sustainable for their livelihoods nor for the environment.

By selling their beadworks, the women can get an additional source of income instead of burning the forests and selling charcoals. They do not have to travel far and wide for hard-earned money, but instead can generate income from home.

Having control of their own income will give them more flexibility in managing the household and allow them to have more control over the decisions of their own lives.

“If I sell my beadworks, I can send my children to school & I do not need to ask their father for money.”
The women organised themselves into a collaborative group, where they share knowledge, improve skills and gain access to a wider market. The Maasai women’s talent is reflected in the quality of their products. Each piece is individually handcrafted with skills, intricate designs and attention to detail. More than that, each and every item comes with a unique story.
By buying a beaded product, you could reduce environmental degradation, support these women in paying for their children's education, and most of all, you could contribute to the empowerment of women by helping them put their future in their own hands.

For more information contact
Mikki Korodimou
michaela.korodimou@gmail.com (Europe)

Stanley Kimaren Riamit
ilepa2@yahoo.com (Kenya)
kimaren@yahoo.com

Designed by © Thai Dang and Mikki Korodimou