

## 1. What's happening in Uganda? Why are so many people there living in poverty?

Nearly two million people in Northern Uganda have been displaced from their homes as a result of the ongoing, catastrophic war traveling throughout East Africa. Throughout the last twenty-five years, they have undergone social deprivation, experienced the bloodshed of family members, suffered from personal injury and illness, and witnessed the destruction of their homes, communities, and livelihoods. Many of these vulnerable people groups have relocated to the District of Gulu, seeking aid and opportunity. There are some who have found ways to sustain themselves and their families; however, thousands of others remain with few chances for employment and education. Gulu is filled with astounding high spirits and energy; but the lack of opportunity has diminished many people's hope for prosperity. As their deprivation of sustenance, opportunity, and optimism continues, there is a growing need for effective actions to take place that will counter poverty, offer hope, and establish sustainability.

## 2. What exactly does 31 bits do?

We are a development organization that believes the most effective means of economic and sustainable growth comes through maximizing the skills and assets already possessed by a group of people and through giving them access to new and innovative opportunities. By giving our designers access to the international market, we are able to help them generate an immediate income that allows them to provide for daily needs while participating in educational programs. By being equipped with literacy education, financial and vocational training, holistic care, and a strong support system, individuals will be empowered to further their careers and attain social equity.

## 3. Where does the money go?

We purchase the jewelry directly from the designers at fair-trade prices. To maintain transparency with our designers, we negotiate a fair price for each piece, factoring the complexity, materials, and time involved in the making. We purchase a set amount of jewelry from each designer each month so they know exactly how much they will be earning. Their monthly wage is comparable to that of a schoolteacher in Northern Uganda. This monthly wage enables them to provide housing, food, and healthcare for themselves and their families, and even gives them a chance to save for future business endeavors. Profits generated through jewelry sales are invested back into the company for operations, purchasing more jewelry, and developing programs for the designers such as English lessons, finance training, and vocational training.

## 4. What are the beads made out of?

Our beads are made out of recycled paper that comes primarily from old posters, magazines, fliers, and textbooks. The beads are then sealed with a non-toxic, water-based varnish.

## 5. How long does it take to make a necklace?

Making beads is a process. The designers spend a few days completing each step of cutting, rolling, varnishing, and finally stringing the final product. Depending on the size and length of the necklace, one designer can make between five and fifteen necklaces in a week.

## 6. How did 31 Bits start?

One of our founders, Kallie Dovel, traveled to Uganda in the summer of 2007, visiting friends and getting a first-hand look at life in Northern Uganda. While she was there, she met women already making paper beads but had no market for selling. After bringing home a box of jewelry, Kallie's friends and family were amazed by the talent and beauty displayed by the beads and there was an instant demand for more. She spent the next year finishing her degree in Cultural Anthropology while dreaming up the concept of a development organization. She brought a few friends on board and her ideas quickly evolved into 31 Bits. The girls traveled back to Uganda in August 2008, and selected six women to begin buying jewelry from on a monthly basis. Since then, we have grown to over 100 women; each with a unique story of suffering that has been overcome with joy and liberation.

## 7. Where did the name 31 Bits come from?

The "31" comes from Proverbs 31 in the Bible, where it describes a diligent woman providing and caring for her family. The "bits" comes from what the beads are made out of...bits of paper!