



## Churning Money From Banana Leaves

The Monitor (Kampala)

NEWS

2 June 2008

Posted to the web 2 June 2008

By Otushabire Tibyangye  
Mbarara

Traditionally, dry banana leaves are used for mulching and making makeshift beds for mourners at burial sites; But Ms Abia Nuwabaine, Ms Mary Kobusingye and others have a different idea; they churn money out of them.

Ms Nuwabaine and her friends are using a combination of dry leaves and scrap paper to make organic beads from which they make necklaces, bangles, earrings and other accessories.

Ms Nuwabaine and Ms Kobusingye, who run a workshop in Ruhiira village, Kabuyanda Sub-county in Isingiro District, were introduced to the craftwork with the help of Millennium Villages Project as a way of poverty eradication.

"On average we are able to make five necklaces per day which we sell at Shs20,000 a double necklace while a single one goes for Shs15,000 and we are now targeting the foreign market," Ms Nuwabaine says.

She says about 1,000 pieces of their produce has been sent to a foreign market in the US. But the trade has its challenges for instance, Ms Kobusingye says they face difficulty in getting dry leaves especially during the rainy season.

"We need to have dry leaves with big sheets so that we are able to cut out good pieces," Ms Kobusingye says. "As beginners we don't have enough money to buy varnish as part of the materials needed."

They are grateful for the innovation that was introduced to by Bead for Life a US based NGO with a branch in Kampala. Some men in Kabuyanda have also developed interest in the business and obtained training from their wives.

The business has not only pleased initiators of Millennium Villages Project but also politicians who have rallied behind the venture.

"This will go a long way to alleviate poverty among people in the district." the district councilor, Mr Elly Twinomujuni says. "The men can now to kill idleness by keeping busy with this project."

The Communications officer Millennium Villages Project, Mr Shakilah Bintshiek says the project has succeeded because residents are eager to adapt new skills to earn extra income other than depending on matooke to earn a living.

While most of their produce is to be exported, there is a potential upscale market especially once production increases. The area has been depending on production of matooke and brewing of gin as a way of earning income.

Residents are also engaged in the production of maize and beans. The enterprise department have also encouraged residents to save and borrow from a village bank newly introduced.

### [Africa Help Wanted](#)

Live and Work Abroad, 3-12 Weeks. Help the Community - Enroll Today!  
[CrossCulturalSolutions.org](http://CrossCulturalSolutions.org)

---

Copyright © 2008 The Monitor. All rights reserved. Distributed by AllAfrica Global Media (allAfrica.com).

---

