

Beads on a string of love

A story of Anna Lobuk



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With the technical guidance of BRAC, the BOMA Project is implementing the PROFIT Financial Graduation pilot in Samburu county, funded by IFAD and the Government of Kenya. The pilot targets 1,600 women and integrates elements of livelihoods promotion, social protection, financial inclusion, and social empowerment. The success rate of participants will be measured against a set of Graduation criteria that examine food security, livelihood diversification, health, and resilience. The pilot will be independently evaluated by Expanding Opportunities.

To the Samburu people of Kenya, beadwork represents their cultural values and traditions. From necklaces and bracelets to belts and sandals, beadwork is used in everyday life as well as in weddings, rituals, and community events. It is considered an honor and often a duty for Samburu women to learn and practice this handicraft. Many women, like Anna, make it their main livelihood.

Growing up too fast

Anna is no stranger to hard work. As a child she pitched in with the daily household chores and when her father passed away, she found herself taking care of her nine siblings. As she got older, she learned how to do beadwork from other women in her community. She made small pieces to put food on the table.

Married at age 12, Anna felt somewhat helpless to even imagine what her future might look like because she had little control over it. So she started her own family and raised livestock because that was traditionally expected of her. When tragedy struck again with the death of her husband when she was just 25, Anna's life became even more desolate.

“Back then I didn’t even know what it was to have hope. Now I hope to build a house and grow my business.”

Education is key

As a single mother raising her five children, Anna has come to appreciate the important role education will play in their futures. She says all the work she does is to ensure they have lots of opportunities and possibilities, with the children's school fees being a priority for her monthly expenses. Through the PROFIT Financial Graduation programme, implemented in Baragoi, Samburu County by the BOMA Project, she has also learned the importance and practice of savings, further padding her businesses against unexpected weather or sickness. Through the programme, Anna received seed capital to invest in her beads business, technical and life skills training on social and health awareness,



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monthly consumption stipend of \$15 USD for the first six months, savings support, subsidized health insurance, and psycho-social support through two years of mentorship from a BOMA Village Mentor. With maize in her stores, a formal water tank and a bank account, Anna has taken a lot of the worry out of her life and is ready to expand her bead-making business as well as the farm behind her home. When asked about her and her family's current situation she exclaimed:

“We look good now! We look healthier now!”



Anna with BOMA Village Mentor Susan Bagajo

over any time. She said she would *always* have tea ready. Anna now plans on expanding her business which means more sales and more savings. At the same time she is working to complete the construction of her home and is looking forward to purchasing a sofa and bed to add to her family's daily comfort.



A cup of tea

When asked what was her happiest moment, Anna replied with a story. Soon after she was chosen to participate in the Graduation programme, her BOMA Village Mentor, Susan, came to her home for a visit. Anna didn't have access to clean water and wanted to serve her mentor a cup of tea. So Anna went to a neighbor and asked her if she could borrow some water. Her neighbor scowled at Anna and told her to just get some dirty water from the river.

Anna was embarrassed and couldn't bring herself to serve dirty water to her new mentor. She was deeply ashamed to not have anything to offer her. Months later, after Anna had started growing her business, she invested in a water tank. What was the first thing she did? She called her mentor and proudly told her that she could come