Sales Fight Abuse
Kenyan Women Create, Sell Beaded Jewelry

By KATHLEEN ROMERO
Journal Staff Writer

In a desperate move to "sustain" their livelihood, women of Loi Loi Loi, a small village in Kenya, are starting a business to sell beaded jewelry and handmade crafts. The women, who are mostly traditional beaders, are banding together to fight against the stigma of being a "solo" woman in a community where such status is frowned upon.

"We are creating something beautiful and selling it to support ourselves," said Wairimu, one of the women involved in the project. "We want to show that we can support ourselves and our families without having to rely on others.

The women have been working with local designers to create new styles and patterns that are both traditional and modern. They are also learning new techniques to improve their skills and expand their product line.

Wairimu said that the project has been a challenging process, but the women are determined to make it a success. "We are working hard to create something unique and valuable for our community."

The project is funded by a local charity that supports women's empowerment and entrepreneurship. The women are also planning to use a portion of the profits to support local schools and community projects.

If you go
WHAT: "Soli Loi Loi Beaded Jewelry"
WHERE: Santa Fe International Folk Art Market
WHEN: 10 am - 6 pm, Friday, Saturday, Sunday
TRANSPORTATION: None
SCHEDULE: Saturday, 4-8 pm, Sunday, 11 am - 5 pm

Sales Fight Abuse of Women

Threatened by men jealous of their success, they formed the "Sama Bari" club in order to protect themselves, building dung-and-bark huts made of sticks and mud to buy food and clothing. They spent days and nights fighting for their rights. Lolo Loi Loi received death threats.

"The women were laughing at us," she said. "They think we are stupid. Our lifestyle started to become better because we have removed women from their homes. They would not come to their homes because they were protected by us."

"The men began to appreciate what they were doing for their village," she continued. "We taught them to respect us."

Once treated as livestock, today the women enjoy the protection of their sons. Before, they couldn't sleep because someone always had to be around to look after them. Now they can sleep safely because they have their own homes.

"We have to fight for our rights," she said. "We are fighting for our future."

The project is supported by a local organization that promotes gender equality and women's rights. The women are also planning to use a portion of the profits to support other women in the community.

Sama Bari means "to draw water," and it's a symbol of strength and resilience. The women are using this as a way to empower themselves and their community.

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