

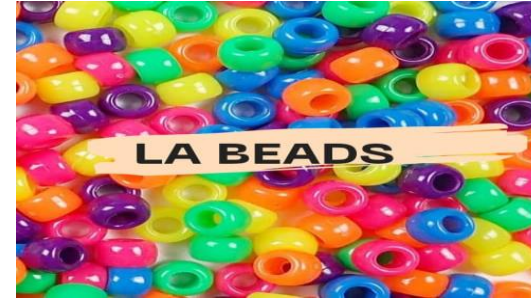
WEP CHALLENGE 2021



LA BEADS

BUSINESS OWNER: LESLEY-ANN RAMONTSOE

- I am a 25 years old young woman with **cerebral palsy**, which does not define my talent.
- I believe that I am capable of overcoming the stereotypes associated with this demographic classification by using my hands to create exclusive beads.
- I am a beneficiary of MT Foundation's Covid-19's rapid response project funded by Gender Links which ignited my craft skill and empowered me to use it for entrepreneurial activities.
- Bead making benefits, over and above being an income-generating craft helps me with coping with my disability and promotes my sense of self.



What is the nature of the business?

- LA BEADS is a bead making business located in Bloemfontein, Free State Province in South Africa
- It is still in the process of being registered officially with CIPC.
- It makes a wide range of bead jewellery, from neckpieces, bangles to earrings.
- Bead making benefits, over and above being an income-generating craft helps me with coping with my disability and promotes my sense of self.



What customer needs are being addressed

- Beads have in recent years become fashion statement not only in Africa but in Europe.
- Customers need beads as costume jewellery for different occasions.
- The demand for beads is always there, especially around heritage month.
- Before crafting any order, I need to understand what the needs of my customer are.



How has the business impacted on other enterprises owned by young women?

- Some customers make last minute decision for a special occasion and put me under pressure to deliver within a short space of time.
- This negatively affect me as a young woman with disability as I am forced to work abnormal hours.
- I also need support on financing so that I can be able to buy more material and modern beadwork equipment, and create jobs for more women as I increase my production
- I connect with other women with disabilities to share our skills in this craft and motivate one another



How viable and implementable is the solution being proposed?

- Costume jewellery, including beads are a must have and are in high demand among working population.
- The need for making more beads will always be there.



What makes the business unique?

- My bead making business is unique because it is disability-owned who are not seen as main actors in business space.
- It is also supporting the local economy as it encourages people to buy local beads, which are unique.
- My dream is to secure Proudly South African mark as the business grows
- I am also passionate about fighting GBV



Use of ICT to promote economic and employment opportunities for young women?

- My business has been using WhatsApp and Facebook for advertising.
- My dream is to have a website once it is officially registered. With the support of MT Foundation and my mother, I have learnt to do the basics with my phone to promote my business.



How have you managed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic?

- During Lockdown Level 5, it was very difficult to cope as the demand for beads also declined.
- I had to rely on WhatsApp to talk to customers and promote my products.
- I also take the COVID-19 safety protocols very seriously.



Anything else you would like to add

- Disabled women-owned businesses usually find themselves competing with all other mainstream women-owned enterprises, which is very difficult.
- I also know dressmaking and leather bags making, and I want to compete with same cohort on similar skills
- As I am a product of Martie du Plessis **special school**, post school, I would love to see an enabling environment created for start-ups owned by women with disabilities
- I will like to thank MT Foundation for editing and improving the quality of my entry to the competition.

