

ADVOCACYNET 343  
Monday May 18, 2020

## Mama Masks Make a Splash in Uganda



**Mama Cave, right, tries out her masks on her team.**

Encouraged by the demand for her face masks during the COVID-19 lockdown, a tailor with limited mobility has launched a small business to expand production in the Ugandan town of Gulu.

Mama Cave, a single mother, heads a team of five tailors with a disability who have used a small grant from AP to produce face masks during the COVID-19 lockdown. They received their first commission, for 200 masks, from the NGO Caritas last week.

Mama Cave's masks will be sold under the brand name of Mama Masks, and marked with an embroidered red tick to distinguish them from competitors.

AP transferred \$400 to Mama Cave in early March through the Gulu Disabled Persons Union (GDPU), an AP partner that advocates for

disability rights in Gulu. The five tailors used the money to produce 640 masks, of which 400 sold for around \$300.



**Mama Cave - Masked entrepreneur.**

The remaining 200 masks were given out free to GDPU members after the government required the wearing of masks in gatherings.

GDPU hopes to provide economic relief to the five tailors, whose work was abruptly halted by the lockdown. Mama Cave earns around \$60 in a normal month.

Mama Cave's team gave themselves each \$40 from the first AP transfer, which left enough cash to buy material for the Caritas consignment. Impressed by their discipline, AP has sent them \$500 to cover the cost of making another 900 masks. The tailors will continue to pay themselves \$40 and invest any remaining profits in future orders.

Uganda has registered 227 cases of COVID-19, with just 5 cases in Gulu. In spite of this, the lockdown has been strictly enforced and was recently extended to May 19.

Patrick Ojok, Program Manager for the GDPU, predicted that any easing of movement will increase demand for Mama Masks because the government requires everyone to wear a mask when traveling in public.



**Florence cuts cloth for masks.**

Mama Masks appears to be the right idea at the right time. When the pandemic began, the government awarded a contract to a private company. Masks also arrived from China and India.

But the company was unable to fill the order and Ugandans were afraid that the foreign masks would carry the virus.

As a result, Mama Cave's masks quickly became known for their quality and reliability. They will be available in three colors - sky blue, white and green - and identified by their embroidered red logo.

Seventeen donors have so far contributed \$1,795 to support AP's COVID-19 appeal for community partners, who are making masks or soap in Nepal, Kenya, Mali, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Palestine.

Many of the donations have come from appreciative friends of Bobbi Fitzsimmons, an AP Board member, who have themselves received masks from Bobbi. Bobbi has so far made 200 masks for friends and medical centers in North Carolina.

**Want to help? All donations to AP are sent to partners like Mama Cave. Donate on our home page. Thank you!**

