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Dear Friends,

It is with great pleasure that I introduce you to Jewels of Hope. This aim of this project is to support and educate children left orphaned and vulnerable by HIV and AIDS. Through partnering with families, churches and organizations JoH is able to provide a means of income generation for child-headed households and vulnerable children that is safe and legitimate; allowing the children to be self-sufficient and providing them with the opportunity to continue with their education.

In 2007, the estimated number of individuals living with HIV and AIDS was 33.2 million globally; 2/3 of those live in Sub-Saharan Africa. There were an estimated 2.5 million new infections in the same year and 1.7 million of those also occurred in SSA. Three-fourths (3/4) of the 2.1 million annual deaths due to AIDS related causes occur in Africa. In some countries in the region, the adult HIV prevalence exceeds 15%; compare that with a prevalence of 0.043% in the United States. Ninety percent of HIV cases in Africa are transmitted through heterosexual sex; more than 60% of those are among married women who have only had one sexual partner, their husbands.

I have worked in public health for more than 15 years and have been living and working in Sub-Saharan Africa since 1996. In that time I have had many opportunities to interact and collaborate with various not-for-profit organizations. I must say, that most of them have been less than impressive. I recommend Jewels of Hope for several reasons. Firstly, the program began as one couple's desire to make a difference in their own neighborhood, supporting their own church and community members. No one on the board of directors collects a salary; all administration is done purely on a volunteer basis. The organization seeks churches and community groups to sponsor 'Connect Groups'. Groups of 5 to 6 orphaned and vulnerable children, including those who are HIV positive, are formed and are paired with a group leader who is trained in jewelry making, business management, life skills for children, spiritual and psycho-social support and HIV and AIDS prevention. Each week, the children come together for a good meal, fellowship, emotional support, and teaching. In addition, they learn how to make one piece of jewelry. They each return home with 3 additional kits to complete during the week. The jewels are marketed largely overseas and the money goes to support the child-headed households. Connect Groups become completely financially independent in only a few months. The children are taught to manage the money, create budgets, and learn how to maintain their businesses. They are trained to establish personal budgets from their earnings to support the household needs and to pay school fees. Thanks to your support, many of the children enrolled in the program will be able to continue with their schooling; something completely unachievable without the Jewels of Hope program. What is truly special about JoH is that children receive personal care and 'parental support', education and sustainable skills rather than hand-outs; proficiencies that will serve them as they seek to become independent.

Many children in Africa are made vulnerable by poor economies, war, political instability, child prostitution and trafficking, incest, religious customs such as forced begging, cultural customs such as female genital mutilation and child marriages, and in addition, they are made defenseless due to myths and misunderstanding surrounding HIV and AIDS. Currently, there are an estimated 11 million orphans in Sub-Saharan Africa due to HIV and AIDS related causes; that number is expected to exceed 20 million by 2012.

By purchasing Jewels of Hope jewelry, you are truly changing lives and communities. All prices are suggested donations and JoH will gladly accept more than suggested selling price for any piece you select. You can also sponsor a child to join a group for US\$ 133.00 or sponsor the start of a new Connect Group with a donation of US\$ 925.00. Your donation will fund beads for one semester's designs for 5 children, the training of the Connect Group Leader, and start up funds.

For more information, refer to

[http://jewelsofhope.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=12&Itemid=9](http://jewelsofhope.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=12&Itemid=9)

Warmest thanks for your support,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Chekaraou', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rev. R. Danielle Chekaraou, MPH