

# Women in Progress

Connecting Cultures



2006 | annual report

Global  
Mamas





## Mission

Women in Progress (WIP), a non-profit organization, envisions women in Africa to be economically independent. Our purpose is to reduce the economic inequality of women by helping to significantly increase the revenues and profits of women-owned businesses. This in turn increases wages, generates new jobs and improves the standard of living for women, their families, and the larger community. We believe that helping women gain economic independence is the most effective way to reduce the dependence on foreign aid and create a prosperous society.

## Programs

Women in Progress helps small woman-owned businesses in Africa to access global markets and manage their growing businesses. WIP enables the economic independence of these women by promoting their traditional skills in producing handmade products under the brand name Global Mamas. WIP also provides members with personalized, hands-on business assistance and computer training to strengthen the capacity of women entrepreneurs to better manage their growing enterprises.

## Global Mamas

In 2003, WIP launched the Global Mamas Cooperative with six members. Today the Global Mamas Cooperative involves over 200 women and is comprised of the 38 individually-owned businesses working together to penetrate larger markets while maintaining their independence. The women are provided fair and deserved payments for their high-quality work. Sales of the Global Mamas' products provide dignity to African women who are now able to earn a fair and deserved living wage.

WIP provides the Global Mamas Cooperative with financial and management support, including:

- Coordination of the production of over 100 products in hundreds of designs (for over 100 customers in the US, Europe, and Ghana).
- Upfront payments for the production of the high-quality goods by financing cash flow.
- Sourcing of raw materials in bulk through a Raw Materials Revolving Inventory-Fund resulting in reduced costs and increased product quality.
- Management of quality control.
- Practical training in new product development, strategic planning, bookkeeping, and marketing.





## 2006 Accomplishments

- WIP facilitated \$254,000 in sales of fair trade products on behalf of 38 member businesses in the Global Mamas Cooperative. For the third consecutive year, WIP has nearly doubled sales of Global Mamas products and is creating outside revenue streams for women and children that directly alleviate poverty in Ghana.
- The women of the Global Mamas Cooperative collected \$99,000 (40% of total revenues) in advance payments, which is predominantly profit since WIP provides most raw materials through a revolving inventory fund.
- Sales of Global Mamas products directly enhanced the wages, standard of living, and confidence of 150 low-income women in Ghana and indirectly impacted over 800 of their extended family members.
- Since joining the Cooperative, each member's income has increased more than 10 times and in 2006 average revenue more than doubled to approximately \$4,900/year. Considering that Ghana's minimum wage is ~\$450/year, income through the Cooperative is substantially higher for participants.
- Each Global Mama increased her individual savings accounts by an average of \$430 in 2006. This is quite tremendous considering that over half of Ghana's population lives on less than \$2/day.
- Each member business increased the number of employees and apprentices by an average of 1.5 persons (54 new jobs in 2006 and 141 since WIP's inception).
- A new Global Mamas Cooperative was launched in Krobo to include 25 female bead makers and artisans in the Eastern region of Ghana.
- Through an extensive volunteer network, WIP provided hundreds of hours of hands-on business assistance and computer training to strengthen the capacity of women entrepreneurs to better manage their growing enterprises.

## 2007 Objectives

- Double the number of women business owners who are part of the Global Mamas Cooperative thereby expanding capacity to meet customer demand.
- Expand sales of Global Mamas products to the UK, become an IFAT fair trade member, and identify a like-minded distribution partner.
- Launch a new Global Mamas sewing cooperative in order to diversify income for a small Ghanaian village completely dependent on farming.
- Grow the Cooperative's raw materials revolving loan fund by finding a fair trade source for jersey cotton items in Africa.
- Develop and implement training programs for members of the Global Mamas Cooperative to further enhance quality control, production management and business management.



# Global Mamas Spotlight



## Global Mama of the Year: ObaYaa Koufie

After depending on her sister for almost 15 years, Victoria "ObaYaa" Koufie has reinvested enough revenue to generate her own clothing line that mixes modern styles with traditional designs. Since becoming a Global Mama, ObaYaa has leased her own store space in a better location, giving her business better exposure. She has hired two new employees and sponsored six new apprentices. She also rewarded a very dedicated employee by tripling her salary.

Although seemingly shy, ObaYaa is a cunning businesswoman. In 2006 she bought an electric machine, renewed the \$670 rent for her store, opened a new bank account, took out a life insurance policy, procured land for a new workshop and store, and took over financial responsibility for her sister's three children. The other Global Mamas look up to ObaYaa as she is able to skillfully manage her quickly growing business and at the same time give back to community through job creation and training. The Cooperative members have chosen ObaYaa as Global Mama of the Year 2006.

## Going Above & Beyond: Mansa Darbah

Mansa Darbah has been a seamstress for nearly a decade and struggled to earn even \$200 per year. Since joining Global Mamas, Mansa has earned more than \$5,000 per year and has hired four new employees. She believes her success is due to placing high emphasis on quality and customer service. Mansa said she is already saving money to buy a new shop and industrial sewing machines within the next five years. Mansa receives the award for Going Above and Beyond as she volunteers regularly to help WIP to tag products and pack boxes for export when meeting aggressive deadlines.

## Most Improved Quality: Kate Abay Tay

Kate "Aba" Tay has mastered the idea of customization and capturing individuality with her product designs. "Nobody else has the same dress my customer has," Kate states proudly. She has gathered and maintained a large number of regular local clients in addition to her work with Global Mamas. Her success has allowed her to be able to purchase a new sewing machine, take on eight apprentices, and save more than \$200. Kate receives the award for Most Improved Quality as she listens carefully to customer feedback, makes immediate improvements, and never makes the same mistake twice.

## Outstanding Mentor: Gifty Saah

Gifty Saah has come a long way in developing and perfecting her batik craft. In 1994, her business declined and she was forced to search for work door to door. She soon made a name for herself with her unique batiks. Seeking to earn a more steady income in order to pay for her sons to attend school, Gifty joined Global Mamas. Since then, Gifty has quadrupled her business. Gifty wins the award for Outstanding Mentor. As Global Mamas' order levels have increased, Gifty has provided careful instruction, advice, and encouragement to new women brought into the Global Mamas community.



# Volunteer Highlights

## Lindsay McCormack & Carol Rivers

Carol and Lindsay decided to take a year off after high school graduation and volunteer their time in Ghana. The two 18 year olds spent the majority of their time developing a cookbook with authentic Ghanaian recipes that is for sale on the Global Mamas website. The young ladies also helped improve merchandise displays in the Global Mamas store. In addition, Lindsay and Carol created new fabric and product designs for the catalog and developed detailed technical specifications for Global Mamas apparel, accessories and home decor items that have helped to improve product consistently and quality.

## Kathleen Kosnar

Putting her years of business experience to work in Ghana, Kathleen Kosnar assisted the Global Mamas Cooperative to expand to the UK marketplace. She conducted detailed research that helped WIP put proper exporting processes in place. She considered various trade agreements to ensure we were benefiting from duty-free exportation for various product categories and looked into the logistics with working with export/import agents in both Ghana and UK. By the end of 2006, WIP was in discussion with a major retailer in the UK and were preparing to export the first Global Mamas consignment.

## Lorna Cronnelly & Susan Pulongbarit

Susan and Lorna came to Ghana to make a difference as well as to conduct research on fair trade. The challenge WIP presented them with was to create a fair trade certification for the members of Global Mamas that would be relevant in Ghana. They interviewed all of the Global Mamas and compiled an education pack including fair trade standards and values that the member businesses should aim to achieve. "We especially wanted the women to understand how their own success can be passed down to their staff and apprentices through good wages and working conditions for everyone," says Lorna.

## Maria Schell

Maria Schell, a student at the University of Oregon's Lundquist College of Business, came to Ghana looking for a fulfilling project helping women in the developing world. Among her many accomplishments, Maria helped to develop a marketing plan for Global Mamas and led a team of other volunteers and interns over the summer to implement various aspects of the plan. Maria helped to better market the Global Mamas' new products online through various search engine optimization techniques. She also designed an official press kit that was required for wholesale trade shows attended by Global Mamas.





## A Different Approach



### **Focus on Implementation & Tangible Results**

While WIP's mission is not unique in Ghana, our methodology and measures of success are innovative. We challenge the typical NGO system by asking, "So you trained 500 people this month, and then what? So you prepared 20 entrepreneurs for export, and then what? Did they implement any of the ideas? Did they export? What real results were achieved?"

WIP generates real, tangible results by taking a unique approach to economic development that is not focused on classroom training. We provide hands-on, personalized assistance to respond to each business' unique challenges and opportunities and most importantly we provide access to new markets.

### **Commitment to Self Sustainability**

The members of Global Mamas have seen hundreds of NGOs come and go over the years due to their reliance on outside funding. While WIP recognizes our individual contributors and the British High Commission as important partners, we are proud to say that over 80% of our revenue is contributed by the members of Global Mamas and our amazing volunteers.

### **Empowerment Through Independence**

Global Mamas is a Cooperative comprised of many individual small businesses that market products under a common brand name. Strategic and management decisions are made by the members of the Cooperative and day-to-day operations are coordinated by WIP. WIP believes that building the capacity of many small businesses will have far greater impact on improving Ghana's economic growth in the long term as compared to opening one or two factories. These business owners then serve as role models for other young entrepreneurs who will know how to take advantage of trading in global markets.

### **Fair Trade Plus**

Because the Global Mamas Cooperative exports and distributes products directly, members of the Cooperative earn over 40% of total revenue in wages. Even in the world of fair trade, this is an outstanding statistic. A typical sweat-shop worker earns less than one percent of a product's sales price. WIP also ensures that fair trade principles are implemented at the grassroots level through the internal Global Mamas fair trade certification program.



### Make a Donation

Fund the sustainable growth of businesses and women's empowerment in Africa with a tax-deductible donation. Learn more about making a donation online at [www.womeninprogress.org/donate/makedonation.asp](http://www.womeninprogress.org/donate/makedonation.asp).

### Purchase Products

By purchasing Global Mamas products, you are offering sustainable livelihoods to women and their families living in poverty. All proceeds go directly to the women and nonprofit programs that assist them with business development. Shop online today! [www.globalmamas.org](http://www.globalmamas.org).

### Volunteer in Ghana

WIP is an international volunteer organization promoting volunteer work abroad through volunteer vacations and student internships. Volunteers and interns work directly with the members of Global Mamas to expand their businesses. Through a short-term volunteer vacation, you will be able to use your skills to help others and make a difference in the future of the women and their families in Ghana. See more online at: [www.womeninprogress.org/volunteer/volunteer.asp](http://www.womeninprogress.org/volunteer/volunteer.asp).

### Contact Us

Meet the members of Global Mamas, learn about batikting, and more at [www.globalmamas.org](http://www.globalmamas.org). Email us at [info@womeninprogress.org](mailto:info@womeninprogress.org).

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