Charlie Collins
Creative Wardrobe
Some of the Mama Ya Mapendo community with hundreds of handmade protective masks.

**Malaika meaning Angel**

In the village of Kalebuka, right in the beating heart of the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C), you will find a school and community project that is shining bright, paving a new, sustainable future for it’s students, their families and the entire community.

*Malaika* is a not-for-profit organisation that impacts thousands of lives every year. The project consists of a free, accredited school that provides a comprehensive education to 346 girls, in addition to a community centre that offers a range of programs to 5,000 youths and adults, and a clean water program with 20 wells that services over 30,000 people each year.
This July I was thrilled to be officially announced as ambassador for Malaika, a charity that I have supported passionately since meeting founder Nöella Coursaris Musunka a few years ago. After hearing her story, I decided to sponsor a student at the school and over the past few years, this special organisation has become very close to my heart.
Life during COVID-19 has been very tough for Malaika. After the school had to close for safety reasons, students were not able to come in for their lessons and for many students, their lunchtime meal was their most substantial of the day.

However, this incredible organisation found a number of effective ways to cope with these challenges, from delivering home work to the students, distributing essential food packages to over 60 families a week, to the students themselves applying their STEM education to real life and using 3D printers to make 1,000 protective face shields!
I decided to speak with Malaika’s Country Manager, Sarah Kalumba to find out more about the Mama Ya Mapendo community mask sewing project that has been responsible for making and distributing over 1000 masks over the past few months.

The project exists to help women build a sustainable future for themselves, learning the ropes of how to run a business from scratch so they can work with pride, raise money for their families and reinvest in their community and the project.

The group is made up of 30 women from the Malaika community, both mothers with students at the school and friends of the community, who over three years studied various courses around entrepreneurship with a number of different teachers and were chosen as being the most accomplished students across the board.
The women learn skills from talented teachers and every item they make is checked for quality.

The women create beautiful items that are sold at the local market, from tablecloths to tote bags and backpacks, and as the items sell, the women are paid and then funds are reinvested into the project.

Maman Mbuya Tshibinu, a member of the wider community told me:

"The mask I received has helped me a lot during this time of Covid-19. It protects me when I am in a public setting and as I have to go sell vegetables in the market to feed the family, it has greatly helped us a lot. At first I felt like it was blocking my breathing, but then I got used to it. I am grateful towards Malaika and the moms who sewed these masks, and I wish they would continue to do this to save others."
Maman Mbuya Tshibinu has benefitted from the mask sewing project.

With the school having just reopened this Monday and life hopefully returning to some normality for the students, teachers and community leaders, I want to send a huge wave of love to all the incredible people of Malaika. Your passion inspires me
every day and I count myself very lucky to be part of your community.

Stay tuned for the incredible tote bags appearing soon on Creative Wardrobe!

Nöella and some of the Mama Ya Mapendo community with their handmade bags ready to sell at the local market.

Are you interested in joining me and sponsoring a student so she can receive the education she needs to become a future leader? You don't have to do it alone! You can team up with a household or friends and club together to sponsor collectively. You can also make a one off donation and give what you can. Find out more about how you can support this incredible organisation here.

And stay tuned for an exciting initiative with my friends at the leading wardrobe rental platform HURR for Malaika launching soon.
love

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