



The UPDATE

JULY 2014



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Left: Foundation for Uganda Women Development set up water tanks at primary schools to help ensure water security and sanitation for students.

45 YEARS OF SUCCESSFUL GRANTMAKING

by Kim Bylander

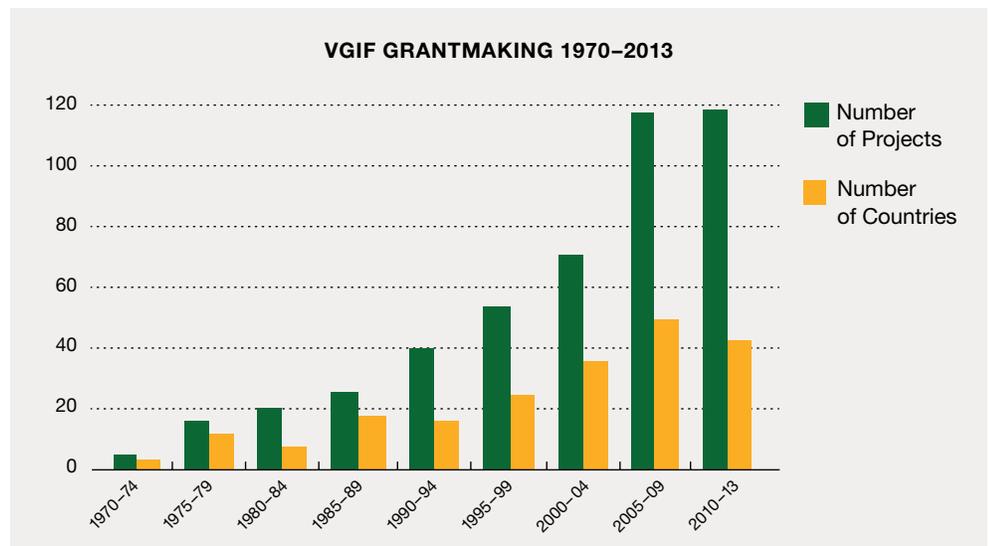
As part of the efforts to continually improve our systems and increase our impact, VGIF has spent several months exploring data from our 45 years of grantmaking. We undertook this process to learn from our grantees' successes and challenges, to better understand our impact, and to identify other ways to support future grantees. The data confirmed that VGIF has accomplished a tremendous amount throughout its history and has great potential to achieve even bigger results. In the chart [right] you can see how our grantmaking has grown, from a few projects a year in the 1970s to over 30 projects per year in our last two funding cycles. By 2013, more than 192,000 women and 23,000 girls were directly served by our funded projects, and this number will continue to grow as VGIF continues to expand its grantmaking.

The scale of our grantees' projects has increased over the years as well. Currently, each project reaches

more than 1,100 people on average. Contributing to the larger numbers of beneficiaries are strategies like mass media campaigns, door to door community outreach and political advocacy—strategies that focus on raising public awareness around women's status and shifting discriminatory norms and attitudes that

impede women's empowerment. VGIF funding not only helps support grantees' efforts to increase their projects' scale, but also increases their capacity to initiate greater impact in the future. In fact, more than three-fourths (79%) of our grantees from the 2012–2013

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



At our April Annual Meeting, VGIF approved the funding of 37 annual and 4 multiyear grants in the amount of 315,654 USD. It is very satisfying and exciting to know that VGIF is making a concrete and meaningful contribution to improving the lives of women and girls in communities all over the world. The Update includes news about some of our projects and demonstrates how your support does make a difference.

The journey of being the President of VGIF has started for me. I have been active with the organization for more than ten years and appreciate that I have been part of our work to strengthen VGIF, and especially, our grantmaking mission during this period and into the future. With the gift from Virginia Palmer's bequest, we have been able to enhance our operation by adding professional staff which is able to provide excellent support, analysis and direction, especially in our grants functions. Kim's report demonstrates the depth of the analysis being done. This research will also inform our

discussions of our future work. This study, combined with the leadership of the Board and Executive Director Elisabet Eklind, is a critical step towards our goal of becoming a world class grantmaking organization.

In October of this year, we are celebrating our 45th Anniversary with a luncheon in New York. We have achieved this milestone in large part due to the generosity and continued support of our donors and members, so we invite you to join us in that celebration. More information is included in this newsletter.

Whether or not you are able to join us in New York in October, we need your help and support. The kinds of grants that VGIF funds and the results from the projects tell wonderful stories. We'd like others to hear the stories and to learn more about our work. Please spread the word by sharing our Facebook posts, by contacting the office to let them know names and addresses of interested potential members and by telling friends and colleagues about what we do. It is indeed meaningful work and it should be celebrated.

Jeri Rhodes
President

It Happened at the Board and Annual Meetings

April 2014

At the Annual and Board Meetings in April, **VGIF selected a new President** (Jeri Rhodes—see also President's message) and other new officers. We also **thanked former President Eileen Menton** for her six years of invaluable service, guiding VGIF during a major transition phase. Additionally, the Board identified **37 new one-year grantees** and **four multi-year grantees**.

VGIF board, committee, and general members also gathered for a **"visioning session,"** where they discussed the core views and values of VGIF. Our organization has grown and changed dramatically since its founding, as has the environment in which we operate. It was both timely and appropriate to pause and take stock of VGIF before we continue our transition into a more mature organization, with a professional office, a governance board, and greater capacity for bigger impact.

This discussion was part of the development of our **new strategic plan**, an effort that continues with several additional steps in the coming months.



45TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

On Friday, October 24, 2014, VGIF will hold its 45th Anniversary Luncheon at the Cosmopolitan Club in New York City. The event starts at 12:00 noon and will include remarks from VGIF grantees, VGIF supporters, and outside experts—all in a short and inspiring program.

Come meet old and new friends and help us celebrate our many accomplishments and hear our plans for a bigger, stronger VGIF that will have even more impact in the future. For more information and regular updates, visit the event page on our website: vgif.org/45.



GHANA

Speaking Up for Sustainable Change

“We did not know that women can also be part of decision making in the family. We now involve them when we are taking decisions in the family.”

– Enoch Yahaya, male participant

A look at the daunting statistics on discriminatory practices in communities all over the world can make anyone feel hopeless. However, real change at the community level can make a world of difference to women and girls. The VGIF grantee, the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) in Ghana launched a women’s justice project this year, with stunning successes. Beginning a dialogue on women’s rights among community members has been “enlightening” and has improved women’s and girls’ rights in four Ghanaian communities. Here are just a few examples of community change:

- Understanding of the rights of women and girls has increased. Community leaders have resolved to address issues such as early marriages, early pregnancies, girls’ education, and early dropout rates.
- Men have begun to communicate better with their wives, show greater respect for women’s and girls’ work, and many have stopped physical and verbal abuse.
- Many husbands are now practicing family planning with their wives and pregnant women are receiving more care.



MONGOLIA

A House of Her Own

A heart condition and physical disability has made life quite difficult for Lham, a beneficiary of the VGIF grantee, the Mongolian Quilting Centre (MQC). After several failed attempts to increase her income generating capacities in order to better care for her two children, Lham noticed an advertisement for MQC’s quilting classes. Now, Lham is able to pay for her heart medications and to buy fresh fruits and vegetables for her family. After many years of struggling to make ends meet, she is saving money for the future and making overall positive changes in her life. Her dream to build a house of her own is slowly becoming a reality.



INDIA

Planting Seeds, Growing Hope

In the 2004 Tsunami-affected areas of India, there are few opportunities for women, whose health and wellness are impacted by a lack of nutritious foods. However, with the help of the Centre for Women’s Development and Research, women in more than 500 families across 23 villages have created kitchen gardens and been trained in maintaining these gardens. Women

and adolescent girls have been trained as trainers too, so the knowledge they have gained can be shared with others. Ms. Rani, a widow and mother of two, said that the garden gives her “purpose and happiness” and she is planning to expand her garden so that she and her family can not only consume the healthy food, but increase their income as well.



FIJI

Medicine on the Move

In Fijian markets, female vendors face incredible hardships due to a lack of access to health services and limited awareness on such important issues as family planning, sexually transmitted diseases, gender-based violence and other human rights. Recognizing a gap in support for these women, Medical Services of the Pacific (MSP) launched a pilot program that included awareness sessions and mobile health clinics in four local markets. The sessions addressed many key issues related to women’s health and wellbeing and provided free medical services to market vendors and their children. One participant, who has been working in the Lautoka market for ten years, explained that the program “has been an eye opener to all market vendors, especially the female market vendors.” Another participant said that she benefitted greatly from the medical tests and would be sharing her new knowledge with the women’s group in her community.

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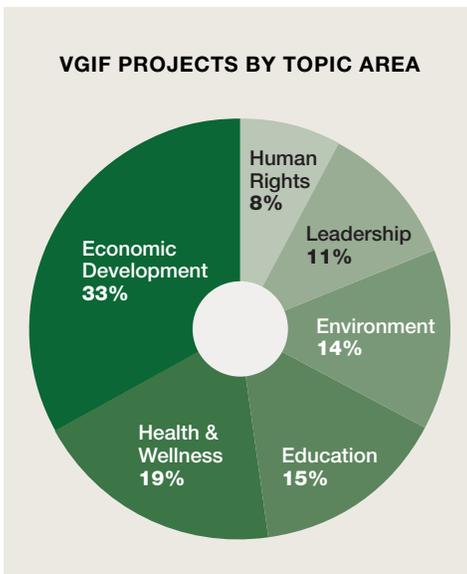
project year reported that VGIF funding helped them strengthen their own organizational capacity, enabling them to develop new partnerships, increase their visibility in the community, develop new initiatives, and obtain additional funding for their work. This kind of growth and expansion of successful community-based organizations means that projects can be more sustainable, with ongoing benefits to participants and their families.

Going forward, we will continue to strengthen our monitoring and evaluation efforts within VGIF and in

partnership with our grantees. We are researching best practices in the grantmaking field, participating in funding networks and conferences, and aligning our evaluation efforts with other women's and social justice funds. We want to further collaborate with our Board, members, partners, and grantees to develop a culture of learning around what strategies are effective in improving women's lives and action towards fostering real, sustainable social change. As an organization, we look forward to bringing in additional resources and expertise to develop our own systems and build a bigger and stronger women's fund for the future.

More information on our data, impact, and grantmaking is available on our new section of the VGIF website vgif.org. You can also find printable copies of our Fact Sheets, focused on VGIF grantees and their accomplishments by topic area.

Note on the Author: Kim Bylander is VGIF's Palmer Fellow. Her role is critical to strengthening our monitoring and evaluation systems and providing greater support for grantees. Among other responsibilities, Kim has reviewed and analyzed 45 years of VGIF grantee reports and data.



THE VIRGINIA PALMER FELLOWSHIP

The Palmer Fellowship was established with part of the generous bequest from former Board member Virginia "Ginny" Palmer. Ginny knew well what VGIF could accomplish and she saw the foundation's potential for the future. She also had the foresight to note that growth, expansion, and professionalism would require resources. It is Ginny's generosity and the continued generosity of our members and donors that have made the further development of VGIF possible.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As the data from our grantees show (see p.1), VGIF has accomplished much during the past 45 years. This data is also helping us learn how to strengthen our grantmaking systems going forward. We have already updated the LOI (Letter of Intent) and the application form, and we are continuing with other enhancements.

Also in support of our continued growth—and in addition to the board and committee members, and those in special positions—we have several volunteers helping to strengthen and expand the work of the VGIF office. This currently includes Eunice Nyaga (from Rwanda) and Wassila M. Hanafi (from Egypt), two accomplished professionals who bring lots of experience, expertise, and enthusiasm to the work of improving the rights of women and girls.

And finally, a note to our generous donors; there would not be 45 years of success to report on without your steady support over the years. As we grow, we rely on your continued support as well as on many more supporters of women's rights to join us.

Elisabet Eklind

Elisabet Eklind
Executive Director

Get involved

Please like us on Facebook at facebook.com/vgif.org and follow us on Twitter @VGIF.

As a member, you can attend the board meetings in New York City. The next meeting will be held on Saturday, October 25, 2014.

Want to volunteer with us?

There are a variety of ways to volunteer for VGIF; making presentations, holding small fundraisers, assisting with various projects, and serving on committees and the board itself.

For all volunteer matters, please contact vgif@vgif.org.



Changing lives,
one community at a time.

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ONE-YEAR GRANT HIGHLIGHT: 2014–15



LIMA, PERU

Photo credit: wifperu.org

Women in Technology Peru (WIT) “Coderise Girls Peru”

WIT Peru aims to improve girls’ opportunities in technology and entrepreneurship careers by launching an 8-week training on programming essentials, enabling girls to build high quality web applications and connect them with mentors in the field. 20 girls will gain important skills and key networking opportunities to increase their future income-generating capacities.

MULTI-YEAR GRANT HIGHLIGHT: 2014–15



BANGLADESH

Photo credit: hopeforbangladesh.org

Hope Foundation for Women and Children of Bangladesh “Closing the Health Divide between the Village and the Hospital”

In the area where the Hope Foundation holds its training and outreach there is a severe lack of doctors, as well as unusually high maternal and infant mortality rates. Many women have little or no income and avoid medical services due to the costs. To improve women’s health outcomes, this three year project will provide information on healthy living, reproductive health, and available health care services, train local community members to disseminate information, and improve access to health care.

NEW MULTI-YEAR GRANTS: 2014–17 CYCLE

Developpement Agropastoral Et Sanitaire (DAGROPASS)
“Contribution to Women’s Empowerment in Bubanza”
Buvyuko (Zina), Burundi

Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE Ghana Chapter)

“Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (ASRHR)”

Akuapem South District and Nsawam Adoagyiri Municipality, Ghana

Bibbo Women’s Association in Development (BWAD)

“Enhancing Women’s Rights and Empowerment Through Vocational Training With Particular Emphasis on Beekeeping in Makulubita Sub-county”

Kalasa Parish-Bibbo, Uganda

Light Trust

“Empowering Tribal Women and Girls: Human Rights, Health, and Livelihood Opportunities”

Salem and Villupuram Districts, India

NEW ONE-YEAR GRANTS: 2014–2015

Association for Community Empowerment Cameroon (ACECAM)

“Put a Smile on the Faces of Domestic Workers” Cameroon

Future In Our Hands Women Cooperative Network

“Empowering rural women through capacity building in integrated livestock and crop/vegetable farming”
Cameroon

Women Poverty Eradication Centre (WOPEC)

“Bee Farming for Sustainable Livelihoods” Cameroon

AZUR Development

“Economic independence for victims of sexual and domestic violence” Congo

Conscience International (CI)

“Lifelong Vocational Skills and Financial Literacy Project”
Gambia

Transformation Environment Aid and Relief or Africa (TEAR4AFRICA)

“Empowerment of Brikama Women in Entrepreneurship Skills” Gambia

Facilitating Learning of Women in Emerging Regions (FLOWER)

“Rise & Shine: Girls’ Club Leadership Camp” Ghana

Transform Ghana NGO

“Empowering girls through Internet Education”
Ghana

Participatory Research and Development Program

“Economic Empowerment of Women Farmers through
Financial trainings and pineapple value addition”
Kenya

Sinyati Women Group

“Young women economic empowerment project” Kenya

**Women in Water and Natural Resources
Conservation (WWNRC)**

“Improving Water and Sanitation Services” Kenya

Education – Developpement – Environnement Naturel

“Empowering women of Isalo through beekeeping”
Madagascar

Medicine for Mali

“Village Birth Attendant Training” Mali

**Niger Delta Women’s Movement for Peace
and Development**

“Enhancing Employability of Women and Girls through
Vocations and Skills Development Training” Nigeria

Smallholders Foundation

“Umuoma Community Women Agriprenuership
Farm for Self Employment” Nigeria

Women Inspiration Development Center

“Street Girls Empowerment and Vocational Program”
Nigeria

Charite Chretienne pour Personnes en Detresse (CCPD)

“Improved Health and Livelihoods through Water,
Sanitation and Hygiene Project” Togo

Action for Rural Women’s Empowerment (ARUWE)

“Gayaza Women Sustainable Livelihood Project”
Uganda

Katosi Women Development Trust

“Harnessing employment opportunities for rural
women in fisher communities” Uganda

**Forum for Africa Women Educationalists
Zimbabwe Chapter (FAWEZI)**

“The Science, Mathematics and Technology
(S.M.T.) Project” Zimbabwe

**National Training and Conferences of the Arts
in Zimbabwe (NATCAZ)**

“Textile Design Project for Rural Women and
Youth in Murewa” Zimbabwe

Feminist Approach to Technology (FAT)

“Replicating FAT’s Tech Center for urban poor girls
in Vadodara, Gujarat” India

R3G Foundation Inc.

“Self-Sustainable community base model for producing
and distributing sanitary napkins in Rural Bengal” India

Salesian Sisters Society

“Expansion of the livelihood skills of BPL Women
in Puliurpuram and Trustpuram” India

Snekithi Charitable Trust

“Campaign against child betrothal, teen marriages,
motherhood & widowhood” India

Women and Child Development Charitable Trust

“Enhancing entrepreneurial skills of tribal women
through Food Processing Training” India

Sahabat Perempuan

“Combating Domestic Violence in Central Java”
Indonesia

Educate the Children, Inc.

“Women’s Empowerment in Rural Nepal” Nepal

Samrakshak Samuha Nepal (SASANE)

“Empowering Women Survivors Through Paralegal
Training” Nepal

Center for Women’s Resources

“Empowering marginalized women through literacy
and leadership capacity building” Philippines

Center for Protection of Women and Child – RABA VOCA

“Empowerment of Women and Girls Victims of
Domestic Violence” Albania

**Center of Psychological Assistance and
Post-Crisis Rehabilitation**

“Awareness-raising about women’s rights and gender
based violence through internet media” Russia

Kirovograd Regional Branch UNENGO MAMA-86

“Accessible Drinking Water as a Guarantee of
a Healthy Nation” Ukraine

El Pozo de Vida

“Mexico City Immigration Detention Center Project”
Mexico

Centro de Investigacion y Formacion para el Desarrollo

“Economic Empowerment as Key to reducing
Violence Against Women” Mexico

Women in Technology Peru

“Coderise Girls Peru” Peru