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Left: COMPPA in Guatemala and Honduras is increasing the participation and leadership of indigenous women in public radio

VGIF AND THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In September 2015 the United Nations (UN) launched the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a global plan of action made up of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. The plan is aimed at eradicating poverty and shifting the world to a more sustainable path.

While the 2030 Agenda may be new, many of its goals are familiar to VGIF. In fact, VGIF grantees address 11 of the 17 SDGs directly, and most others indirectly. From promoting gender equality to enhancing the economic rights of women and girls, VGIF and our grantees can share experiences and participate together in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

More importantly, the SDGs have created new opportunities for VGIF grantees. Over 150 world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda, which gives grassroots groups a critical platform for advocacy and keeping their governments accountable.

“The SDGs help us keep focused so

that we do not do work in isolation but contribute to development with other partners,” says Agnes Mirembe (pictured, right), Programs Manager at Action for Rural Women’s Empowerment (ARUWE), a VGIF multi-year grantee in Uganda. During 2015 – 2018, the ARUWE project will train 150 rural women farmers in techniques that will increase their benefit from agricultural production and will teach them how to secure their rights to land.

Agnes says that the SDGs not only provide ARUWE with a guide to measure their own work, but participants benefit as well: “The SDGs help ARUWE hold itself accountable to serving the community, in the sense that we want our beneficiaries to have a basis to measure the impact of our work in their lives.” For example, she explains that community members in the sub-counties where projects will take place can monitor ARUWE by

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VGIF Parallel Event at CSW60

Women’s Empowerment and Sustainable Development: Learning from Leaders on the Groups

Wednesday, March 23, 2016
12:30-2:00 PM
Salvation Army Auditorium
221 East 52nd St (btw 2nd & 3rd Aves)
New York, NY 10022

Featuring Agnes Mirembe, Programs Manager of VGIF multi-year grantee, Action for Rural Women’s Empowerment (ARUWE) of Uganda

It Happened at the Board Meeting

October 2015

In October 2015, VGIF Board and Committee members gathered in Minneapolis, MN for the Midyear Board Meeting – the first VGIF Board meeting to be held outside of New York City.

At this meeting, **funding for six new multi-year projects (2015-2018) was approved:** Women in Water and Natural Resources of Kenya, Raba Voca of Kosovo, Centro de Investigacion and El Pozo de Vida of Mexico, and Action for Rural Women's Empowerment (ARUWE) and Katosi Women Development Center of Uganda.

The Board approved a new tagline, Small Grants – Local Action – Better Lives.

Board and Committee members honed their fundraising and friend-raising skills in a workshop led with enthusiasm by Florine Swanson, Convener of the Development Committee. In a fun and interactive session, Board and Committee members role played in groups, practiced presenting VGIF to different audiences, and discussed outreach strategies for new and established VGIF supporters. Many thanks to Florine for a great job facilitating!

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



There is a lot going on at VGIF! The Project Grants Committee, staff and previewers, have started their work reviewing 55 grant applications for this grant year, so the Board can approve approximately 40 grants at our April Board meeting. This process is the core to our mission at VGIF. It is always such a joy to hear about the ways in which women look at their lives and see opportunities. While we support our grantees financially, it is their hard work and imagination that makes all the difference. With the increased capacity in the office and continued support from our donors, we have been able to expand our grants program beyond the single year projects, allowing grantees to build on their experiences.

In March, delegates representing VGIF will attend the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW60). We will again participate in a “parallel event” and hear from one of our multi-year

grantees, Agnes Mirembe from Uganda. There are several activities planned to keep our delegates informed about what's happening at CSW60 and at VGIF.

The April Board meeting and Annual Meeting will be held in New York City. At these meetings, we review the work of the past year, approve the one year grants and elect our officers for the next year. This year, we will be reviewing and approving our strategic plan for the next three years. While this is a business meeting, it is also an opportunity to engage with the Board and the staff about the work we are doing.

I am excited by the scope of the work reported in this Update. VGIF has worked hard for many years to support our grantees; the reports bring us news of excellent and interesting work that really do improve the lives of women and girls.



Jeri Rhodes
President

VGIF Evening Reception in Minneapolis

VGIF used the opportunity of holding a Board meeting in Minneapolis to reach out to local VGIF members, other supporters, and new friends, during an evening reception. Over 50 guests enjoyed refreshments and learned more about VGIF's grantmaking around the globe. Board member Julie Pennington presented on her 2013 site visit to current multi-year grantee Rural Women Empowerment

and Development Organization (RUWEDO) of Kenya. Julie noted, “The VGIF grant helped the widowed women gain the skills and tools they needed to be more food secure, now and in the future.” Julie also pointed out that seeing firsthand the impact of a VGIF grant was what inspired her to join the VGIF Board.

Right: VGIF Board members with guests.





CAMEROON

Education for All Generations

“I didn’t know that child marriage is this bad, I will not allow this practice again in my village,” said a local village chief after attending a training offered by Inter-Confessional AIDS Network (INTERNAP) Women Cameroon. The group is raising awareness of the risks of child marriage among women and girls, local leaders, and the community at large. The group has so far facilitated six radio panel discussions, five sensitization visits to local schools and churches, one focus group with a men’s group, and three community meetings. They have reached a total of over 6,200 individuals, including 4,300 women and girls.



ARGENTINA

Incarcerated Women Receive Job Skills to Improve Their Futures

‘Asociacion Yo No Fui’ (YNF) is preparing incarcerated women for

the workforce once they are released, through vocational skills trainings in carpentry, sales, and marketing. Participants have completed trainings in construction and design and two of their four constructed doll houses sold at one of Argentina’s largest trade expositions. Gloria, a participant, says, “We’re given tools that we can use and put in practice in any kind of entrepreneurship or any area of our lives. With this workshop, I’m bringing part of me back to life that I thought were dead, I’m finding myself again.” A bi-monthly support group is also available. In this group, the women can address issues of trauma, struggles with self-sufficiency, and how to cope with life inside and outside the prison system.



ALBANIA

Women vs. Breast Cancer: Raising Awareness of Breast Cancer

Albanian Society in Development is partnering with eight manufacturing firms to raise awareness of breast cancer, targeting their female employees. Through seminars and with the support of a mobile mammography clinic—staffed by volunteer doctors and medical students—women learn about early screening, diagnosis, and self-care. Local hospitals are engaged to accept referrals of women

with high risk factors and to provide mammograms to interested women. The project has also been able to involve the Ministries of Health and Education in order to reach many more women. The Project Director notes, “These partnerships have helped us access groups of women we wouldn’t have been able to reach otherwise.”



INDIA

Income Generating Opportunities Empower Women

“Since September 2015, we are doing coir ropes production, and make a daily income of 200 Rupees. That helped me to gain confidence in me and our family future. I put my three children in schools, they are doing school education, and the income is adequate to run my family,” says Margret, a participant and former bonded laborer. Through their grant, Rural Women Development Trust is enhancing the economic sustainability of women released from bonded labor, to prevent them from returning to bonded labor and to make sure their children have access to education. The project has already reached 60 women laborers with another 225 family members benefitting from the new income.

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



In November 2014, about 30 young men and women gathered at the VGIF office to get to know our work and each other. Meg Chappell of the Board of Directors and VGIF's Development Coordinator Catelin Blowers organized the event. This was the first meeting of the Young Professionals Network in NYC.

Throughout the following year, we kept this group informed of VGIF's work and also held a few informal meetings. But three more structured events in 2015 stand out.

In March 2015, Meg and Catelin organized an evening with the VGIF grantee attending CSW59, Margret Joeji from Light Trust in India. Margret made a short presentation and the Young Professionals asked a number of questions. Everyone left the event

impressed with Margret's courage and inspired by the many ways in which she works for women's rights in Southern India.

In August 2015, the Young Professionals organized their first fundraising event, a 5K race in Harlem. Four members of the Young Professionals raised money and also completed the raise, while other members served as cheerleaders. The result was an impressive \$1,300 in donations that included 35 new donors.

The year ended with a highly successful Arts Event, further detailed in a separate piece on this page. We now look forward to expanding the efforts of the NYC Young Professionals, and having additional such networks start up in other cities around the world.

Are you interested in learning more about starting a Young Professional Network? Please contact Catelin at cblowers@vgif.org.

Elisabet Eklind

Elisabet Eklind
Executive Director

VGIF HOLIDAY ART SHOW

VGIF's 'First Annual Holiday Art Soirée hosted and curated by Mueller + Jacobs' was held in New York City on December 8th. The show was the brainchild of Nicholas Jacobs, a leader of VGIF's Young Professionals Network, and his business partner, Andrew Mueller. Nearly 150 guests perused and purchased available artwork and VGIF grantee items that were on display. This was a fun and unique way to introduce VGIF to new audiences, and to raise funds in support of VGIF's grantmaking around the globe. We now look forward to the Second Annual Art Soiree in 2016.

* Sustainable Development Goals:

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Get involved

The next Board and Annual Meetings will be held in New York City from April 15-16, 2016. All VGIF Members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Please like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/vgif.org](https://www.facebook.com/vgif.org) and follow us on Twitter [@VGIF](https://twitter.com/VGIF).

Sponsor a Project

By sponsoring a project, you can make a direct difference in the lives of women and girls around the world. Your funding will support a designated project grant that is aligned with your areas of interest, and you will receive individualized reports of their accomplishments over the grant year.

To learn more, contact info@vgif.org.



Small Grants – Local Action – Better Lives

11 Broadway, Suite 510, New York, NY 10004
(212) 213-0622 www.vgif.org