



Right Sharing of WORLD RESOURCES

1ST QUARTER 2021 | www.rswr.org

Overcoming Adversity HAPPY WOMEN SELF-HELP GROUP

Happy Women Self-Help Group was formed in 2017 by women who wanted to pool resources in order to support their small vending businesses. They are located in the “Eastlands” of Nairobi. This neighborhood, which was planned housing for the city’s working class, is slowly degenerating into a slum. All of the women were proprietors of businesses such as small groceries, hair salons, secondhand clothes stores, and cooked-food kiosks. They used their grant from RSWR to “scale up” or change their existing businesses and add new items for sale.

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The group has worked through obstacles while persevering in their businesses. Their first challenge happened even before they received the funds

from RSWR, when their chairlady, Violet Mihadia, died of cancer in August of 2019. She was present and healthy at the training sessions, and then shortly afterwards was diagnosed and passed away within weeks. The group contacted Samson Ababu, the RSWR Field Representative for Kenya, for help. Samson visited them, praying and grieving with them. The women appointed the Vice Chairlady as the new Chairlady.

In the early days of the women’s group, the first members were fearful to take a loan, worrying that they wouldn’t be able to pay the money back. Only five women took initial loans of Ksh. 10,000 (\$100). As the others saw that the loans had helped the initial borrowers’ businesses

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Happy Women group member selling French Fries

PARTNERING WITH WOMEN IN COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

GOD CALLS US TO THE RIGHT SHARING OF WORLD RESOURCES, FROM THE BURDENS OF MATERIALISM AND POVERTY INTO THE ABUNDANCE OF GOD’S LOVE, TO WORK FOR EQUITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIP WITH OUR SISTERS AND BROTHERS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

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Learning from our Partners



Happy Women Group Member making tie dye for her business

HAPPY WOMEN continued from page 1

to thrive, their confidence grew. The group says: "The project enables us to ... improve the economic and social status of the group and our families." Their work has brought them closer, as they discuss individual challenges, offer possible solutions to each other, and give each other emotional support.

Covid-19 had varying impacts on the women's businesses. Hair salons and secondhand clothing stores saw losses during and after the lockdown. However, food-related businesses continued to do well, and some even increased their sales. The group has decided to concentrate on selling food and toiletries during this period.

The group has a new "Welfare Fund," to which all the women contribute Ksh. 100 (\$1) each week. This fund is used to help members in an extreme emergency such as a death in the family or a grave illness. This is in addition to each woman's individual "share savings," where they all save Ksh. 200 (\$2) per week for unexpected family expenses. These savings help protect the women's businesses so that they don't have to take out funds to meet family

needs. Throughout the Covid-19 global crisis and the loss of their Chairlady, the group has persevered, relying on support from each other and RSWR to overcome adversity.



Current donors who maintain new 2019 giving levels will continue to be matched in 2021! All new and increased giving will also be matched in 2021!

Partner Spotlight

MRS. ALAMELU BANNAN

MANAGING TRUSTEE OF RURAL WOMEN DEVELOPMENT TRUST IN SALEM, TAMIL NADU, INDIA.



Although Mrs. Alamelu Bannan grew up in a low-caste Dalit family, she was given the opportunity to obtain an education by a teacher who saw her potential. With a Bachelor's degree in Commerce and certification in Cooperative Training, she fights against the bonded labor system and has released many families from this type of exploitation. She has received recognition among the underprivileged communities as well as from government departments as a women activist and worker for women's rights and development. In addition to her work with the RWDT, she is a full-time social worker.

RSWR has partnered with RWDT in 3 different projects that educate newly-freed bonded laborers to make a living in a sustainable way.

Reflections on an American Worldview

LISA GRAUSTEIN, A FORMER BOARD MEMBER, TRAVELED WITH RSWR TO ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA, 14 YEARS AGO, TO LIVE AND WORK THERE. CURRENTLY, SHE IS HELPING RSWR EXPLORE THE LEGACY OF COLONIALISM AND EMPIRE IN THE WORK THAT WE DO. HERE SHE REFLECTS ON HOW HER TRIP CHANGED HER WORLDVIEW:

Whenever we leave our own context, we develop a deepening appreciation for the differences we encounter. Rural India is really different from Boston, where I live. Going to India heightened my understanding of the privileges many people in the United States take for granted, such as access to clean running water. Before I went to India, people would say ignorant things such as, “It takes a long time to get things done there,” with a clearly condescending attitude. The day after I arrived, the NGO where I was working (SPREADS) had a meeting – including staff, volunteers, board members, and community members – at which it decided to open a school; two months later, we were looking at properties. One year later, it was open, with 250 students and a social worker to provide services, a rarity in the area. The speed with which the school was established would be impossible in Boston!

Traveling to countries like India requires an unlearning of the United States’ worldview of superiority. Community decision-making and community-based problem-solving

have incredible power – it was so inspiring to see what people were doing; things that our sense of “process” in the U.S. slows down or prevents. We in the U.S. have so much internalized colonialism to unlearn in our thinking about not just other nations, but how we do things ourselves.

Even though most of Right Sharing’s partners are not Quaker, Right Sharing employs a real Quaker model of exploring redistribution of unequally obtained wealth. It’s not charity, it’s not handouts, and it’s not the model of ‘power over’ giving. Right sharing requires me to really examine my consumption of resources – money, time, material items, natural resources – and to live in a way that is more balanced for myself, my family, and the global population. I am still in relationship with the people with whom I lived and worked 14 years ago. That’s not just about the work that we did together; we care for each other’s families, and we pray for each other’s countries and communities in times of political upheaval and personal challenge. Right Sharing is not just about the material resources; it’s also about mutual care in relationship

Right Sharing also operates with expectations of people in the United States and in our partner countries. In the States, we work together to lower



Lisa with participants in SPREADS free English class for college students and community members.

our carbon footprint and live with what is materially enough. It can be spiritually enriching to explore what is ‘enough,’ involving a reorientation to how we’re understanding ourselves and our lives. In the women’s circles in Kenya, India, and Sierra Leone, it’s about women coming together in mutual support to create businesses and to support their families and their communities. The dual work each group, in the States and in our partner countries, has to do is about people living in a way that is sustainable, whole, grounded, and dignified. Poverty does not create those things, nor does over-consumption.

When I traveled in India, I heard people say, “You’re from the US: your country is rich, but spiritually bankrupt.” What we’ve seen in the United States during Covid – people demanding haircuts over healthcare and storming the Capitol – indicates that we have indeed prioritized consumption over wellbeing. Our spiritual bankruptcy is visible to the entire world. Right Sharing offers us a way to move out of spiritual bankruptcy through relationship and community.



Flower Mandala



RIGHT SHARING OF WORLD RESOURCES

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Reflections on Enough

I am at the end of my working life, and, like many people in my generation, have accumulated a lot of stuff. It is a blessing to be able to downsize and gift things. Constantly thinking about my definition of enough and how it has changed over the years, I have started to focus on what it means for folks who literally do not have enough. Having enough is not just about material objects – it is about love, community, something to do, and having something to look forward to.

When I took Jackie's workshop The Power of Enough in November, the big takeaway was what I learned from others, where they're coming from and what their lives are like. Hearing other people's solutions and ideas on enough from the communal sharing was most helpful. I had not expected the power of the group experience to change my understanding.

**- The Power of Enough -
A workshop with
Right Sharing at the FCG Gathering**

June 27th - July 3rd 2021



RIGHT SHARING OF WORLD RESOURCES
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