



Global Grassroots

CONSCIOUS SOCIAL CHANGE FOR WOMEN



2020 SPRING UPDATE

Dear friends,

The world has changed so significantly in the last few months. We acknowledge the extreme stress, fear, financial challenge, sickness, and loss that so many in the world are facing. We are deeply concerned with the ways this frightening pandemic is disproportionately affecting the world's most vulnerable through systemic inequity. We also honor the extraordinary stories of resilience, creativity, and community support emerging from across the globe.

It is at this intersection of devastation and healing, uncertainty and possibility where Global Grassroots' women change agents in East Africa stand. In the following pages you will find updates on their efforts and evidence of their remarkable resilience in these trying times. Despite many living on less than US\$2 a day, our women are stepping forward as change leaders and first responders in their communities. They inspire me, as they so often do, to recognize how much we can do for each other with the bare minimum of resources.

And even as we voluntarily isolate ourselves, we are feeling ever more connected. We need each other to survive this. And we will. This past week also marks the 26th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide that resulted in nearly 1 million deaths in just 100 days. Rwanda and its resilient citizens have rebuilt from the devastation of human atrocity, and the world and this planet will flourish again too. But it depends on each of us now. We are invited to step out of fear into our highest possibility. To act with love and compassion. To see our interdependence. To recognize that true wellbeing will only be achieved if we all are included. To find creative ways now to support those in greatest need, not only with a single gesture of kindness and generosity, but also with a radical commitment to transform the systems that uphold inequality.

It starts with ourselves. Taking a breath. Expanding our awareness. Listening and asking what is needed. Responding from a place of curiosity, non-judgment, and compassion. And then collaborating with those in need or without a voice to help deliver the positive change they desire and deserve.

To support your wellbeing, mindfulness, and commitment to conscious social change, we have created a list of resources at the back of this report. We hope you are inspired to join this movement of conscious change by finding ways you too can contribute mindfully to our collective wellbeing.

Warmly,



Gretchen Ki Steidle
Founder & President

First Responders

On March 15th, Rwanda recorded its first case of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. As of April 14th, close to 127 cases are now confirmed, with the likelihood of dozens more and growing.

Global Grassroots has been operating its Academy for Conscious Change in Rwanda since 2006 and has trained hundreds of vulnerable women to initiate and operate their own social change ventures. Through our transformative programs, emerging female change agents step into new roles as community leaders, working to address the issues of highest priority facing women and girls. To date, 17 of our social ventures in Rwanda focus on clean water provision and hygiene and sanitation education. They currently operate 25 clean water access points serving more than 75,000 people. As villagers travel daily to these water sites to collect water, our teams are not only key figures in ensuring the wellbeing of their communities; they are at the front-lines of COVID-19 prevention.

In communities where access to clean water and soap are limited, where individuals still attend markets daily to sell their wares and purchase food for their families, people are extremely susceptible to contracting COVID-19. And while local officials have advised citizens to procure supplies like hand soap, hand sanitizer, gloves, and masks, many of these materials are rising in price and completely unaffordable for the most impoverished.

Global Grassroots' women have stepped into the current void. Ten venture teams operating 14 water sites will take a three-pronged approach to COVID-19 prevention in their communities. This includes:

- Each water site will be outfitted with a hand-washing station
- Each team will train in making homemade liquid soap, then will sell soap at a fraction of market prices. They will also give away free soap to the most vulnerable and impoverished families in each village. Sales will fund ongoing supplies to sustain the program.
- Each team will conduct hygiene training on proper hand-washing and COVID-19 prevention.

The ten teams will start by reaching approximately 2100 households or 8400 people with an average of 2.5 liters of liquid soap per household. Within this outreach, 1680 people will be given soap for free. We are so proud of our women for stepping forward as change leaders and first responders in their communities.



CLUSTERING FOR IMPACT

Jali Team Expansions

In 2019, in response to impending climate change impacts to front-line communities, Global Grassroots answered an urgent call to find the most scalable and efficient way to expand our reach and deepen our impact. Our vision was to create a ripple effect and community-saturation impact model, both wide and deep, that relied on clustering expansion projects in regions where we already had powerful women leaders in place. Global Grassroots selected the Jali Sector, Rwanda, for our first “cluster” pilot program. As of March, we have now funded four out of the total 5-7 expansion ventures anticipated in Jali. The first of three of these teams have reached a total of 4124 people with access to clean water, and 1951 people have been trained in a range of educational programs, including gender equity, hygiene, family planning, income generation, and nutrition. Our fourth team is finishing its construction and was set to start selling water by the end of the April. We have two additional teams currently in development and a further three teams considering expansion opportunities—more on each team below.

A Community in Crisis

In 2020, Global Grassroots has dedicated the majority of our programmatic focus on investing in clustered place-based community impact. And we are so glad we did. As the COVID-19 pandemic hit Rwanda, our clustered teams pulled together to create the remarkable sector-wide unit of first responders described above. Their training as conscious social change leaders prepared them to meet the challenges with creativity and resilience. Many of the Jali sector team leaders were called on by their communities to initiate and join prevention efforts. More on our COVID-19 response strategy below.

Further, in March, Rwanda suffered from unusually intense storms, including lightning, flooding, and mudslides. Over 1100 people had to be evacuated in the Jali region, and over 58 people died from drowning or their houses collapsing. Many of the Jali sector team leaders were recognized by the Rwandan government and called on to join the education and evacuation efforts. One of our Jali teams, Bright Future, which has been trained in our trauma-healing technique, provided counseling and support to their community affected by the storms.

We are so proud of our women and so grateful that their training as conscious social change leaders has paid off.



Young girl collecting water.



Collecting water at a contaminated source.



In communities with no water access points, family water is collected from puddles shared with livestock.



Hygiene & Culture, Kitchen Gardens

Team Hygiene & Culture

Jali Sector Expansion Project

Team Hygiene & Culture (H&C) launched their first water venture in 2016, which initially faced water shortages due to military camp disruptions. They courageously put their new skills as conscious social change agents to work and negotiated an agreement with the military camp for increased local water service. Before H&C's launch, households often spent 300 RWF per jerry can of water. Now those same households pay only 30 RWF, a tremendous savings which the women use to pay school fees or join a rapidly expanding lending circle, which now has 384 members. The team has also helped reduce malnutrition through the use of kitchen gardens.

Update: In January, H&C opened their second water site, which includes two water storage tanks at each of the two water sites to offset

municipal water disruptions and military camp water diversion. Additionally, H&C designed and installed ten kitchen gardens in five nearby villages, which serve as demonstration gardens for teaching, inspiring, and supporting over 50 home gardeners, positively impacting the health of hundreds of children. In March, H&C held a workshop on malnutrition and over 81 households attended.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, H&C identified the most at risk families within their community and created a food delivery system that also included training on hygiene and sanitation for the most vulnerable families. H&C will continue to monitor the most vulnerable families in their community and provide support as needed.



Tiered kitchen garden.



Container kitchen garden.



Water storage tanks.



Team Vision

Jali Sector Expansion Project

Team Vision launched their first water venture in 2017. Vision initially faced a tremendous obstacle when their water supply was diverted for the military base in the area. But this dynamic team persevered, and by engaging the community and local officials, they raised more than 425,000 RWF (US \$455) as well as the workforce needed to excavate a new pipeline. Now they successfully supply water to over 3200 people. While the team consistently worked on finding a solution to their water access problem, they never missed an opportunity to run their social change program. They conducted classes on family planning for 180 couples, provided birth control resources to vulnerable women in their community, and created a lending circle that grew to 193 women.

Update: Recognized for their benevolent leadership, team Vision now manages two additional water

sites. Due to water disruptions from the local municipality, 329 households (1316 individuals) go without regular clean water access. In September of 2019, team Vision was granted a venture expansion plan to add two 5000 liter water tanks. In January 2020, they opened their new water site, which reaches 293 households.

To improve the health of their community members, in February, team Vision held a workshop on sanitation for 36 households. With expanded income from water sales, Vision will continue to offer training in financial literacy, vocational skills, as well as support in the form of food and sanitation supplies to their most at-risk neighbors. Like team H&C, Vision will be providing food, hygiene, and sanitation supplies, including much-needed soap to their most vulnerable neighbors, to help combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus.





Team Unite

Jali Sector Expansion Project

Team Unite launched their first water venture in 2016 in the Jali Sector with the mission of improving the lives of women and girls in their community. Their water venture provides more than 3,000 people with fresh, safe water that is close to home. With the time saved gathering water nearby, the women in the village are now able to generate income through small community-based businesses.

Update: Team Unite will be expanding their reach with a new standpipe and water tank that will serve an additional 192 households made up of 560 individuals. Team Unite will also provide training on family planning and gender equity to 60 families who experience domestic violence with the hope of helping transform the way women

are valued in their community. In February, team Unite was approved for their expansion project and will be extending their pipeline from their existing site to a holding tank 2 km away to bring water closer to two nearby communities—reaching 1341 under-served community members. In March, team Unite excavated their water site and construction has begun. Everyone is working overtime to get the new water tap installed and tested so that it can help support families in need of water during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Team Unite is also centrally involved in the community wide three-pronged approach to COVID-19 prevention in their communities and will be assisting with soap making training and hygiene and sanitation training in the Jali Sector.





Team Bright Future

Jali Sector Expansion Project

Team Bright Future launched their first water venture in 2017 in the Jali Sector. Since launching their women-led water venture, team Bright Future has served at least 1382 people (in 546 households) with clean, safe water each month. With the money earned from water sales, Bright Future supported 192 financially vulnerable people, in 32 households by providing two free jerry cans of water each day. Further, they collaborated with social health workers by identifying and intervening on behalf of women in the community most at risk for domestic violence; and identified and intervened on behalf of youth ages 12-18 who are at the highest risk for early and illegal marriage. In total, team Bright Future has sensitized 557 people (292 women and men, and 265 girls and boys between ages 12-18) through transformational education sessions. With the time saved collecting nearby water, eight of the team members learned and

created handcrafts to increase their financial stability. The money generated from craft sales is being used to establish savings groups that contribute seed money for further development of craft ventures.

Update: In February, Bright Future requested expansion funding to expand their community training services to 780 additional people, including trauma-healing programs for families suffering from domestic violence, family planning, and gender rights training, and income generation training for women. Bright Future has become a leader in trauma informed-healing and were called on to join the education and evacuation efforts during the recent landslide. They have also been providing counseling and support to their community affected by the storms and the COVID-19 crisis.





“The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members.”
- Coretta Scott King

As COVID-19 continues to spread, the future has never felt so unpredictable. These are challenging times for us all, and we hope you are well in spirit and health. Right now, we’re doing everything possible to sustain daily operations and provide financial support to our courageous women in East Africa. While there’s a lot of uncertainty, we also know that we need to adapt fast to our changing reality. Now, more than ever, our community needs us. And we need you.

If you’re able, please make a donation to the [Global Grassroots Emergency Fund](#) to help support the on-the-ground work in East Africa. If you’re unable to donate and partner with us at this time, there are many other ways we can support each other and stay connected.

Please follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#) and share our Spring Update with your family and friends. Most importantly we would love to stay personally connected during this time. Please join our Conscious Change Circle which is held virtually the third Friday of each month at noon ET. For login information, please email Susan at spatrice@globalgrassroots.org.

Resources for Personal Transformation & Social Change in the time of COVID-19

INNER WORK: Resources for your own wellbeing and mindfulness

[Conscious Change Circle](#): Global Grassroots holds a once a month call on the third Friday of each month at 12 noon. Please join us as Gretchen shares her grassroots perspective on wellbeing, self-care, meditation practices, and important updates from our women and water teams in Rwanda and Uganda as they navigate COVID-19 and take leadership in their communities.

Grounding and Lovingkindness Meditation, from Gretchen Steidle.

[HealthFlix](#): Over 100 world leaders in health, wellbeing, psychology, psychiatry, yoga, and lifestyle have joined forces to create a packed schedule of FREE online classes to keep people physically and mentally healthy during the coronavirus crisis and beyond.

WellbeingProject Live: Wellbeing Series Every Tuesday from 12 – 1pm ET
The Wellbeing Project - in collaboration with its co-creators, the Impact Hub Network, Skoll, Esalen, Ashoka, Synergos and Porticus - is offering a series of live, virtual gatherings to extend wellbeing support to our community at this time and to provide ways for us all to practice self-care. They will be doing a series of webinars with leading wisdom teachers touching on different things ranging from poetry to meditation. <https://skoll.zoom.us/j/745384928>

[Awake Network](#): List of resources for Mindfulness and Resilience include webinars from Kristin Neff, Jack Kornfield, Pema Chödrön, Sharon Salzberg, Dan Harris, Tara Brach and many others.

INFORM: Avenues to learn more about how Coronavirus is affecting the world's most vulnerable.

How Coronavirus is Affecting [Developing Countries](#)

How Coronavirus is Affecting [Refugee Communities](#)

How Coronavirus is Affecting the [Homeless](#)

How Coronavirus is Affecting [People of Color](#)

How Coronavirus is Affecting [Domestic Abuse Worldwide](#)

INSPIRE: Stories of resilience and grassroots support that inspire

[Obama Foundation Stories of Hope](#)

[Yes! Magazine Stories of Good](#)

[Mindful Magazine – Outpouring of Kindness](#)

