Our History

In 2004, founder Gretchen Steidle Wallace left for South Africa to research the HIV/AIDS issue. She spent a month crisscrossing the country, interviewing social workers, health care workers, NGOs, social entrepreneurs, academics, business leaders and individuals.

Photo by Natalie Obermeier
Towards the end of her trip, Gretchen met a young woman named Zolecka Ntuli in a Cape Town township. Zolecka told of her outrage when a 12-year old girl was raped by a group of young boys.
Despite the fact that she was unemployed and had no funds, Zolecka responded by starting a grassroots support group to combat sexual violence. She found some loose change to buy bread, and invited 15 women to start a dialogue about the issue of child rape. She sold beadwork and HIV ribbons, using the money to put herself through counseling training and to provide some food, often the only meal her members might eat that day. Each step of the way, she evolved her approach to improve her solution.
Six months later, when Gretchen first met her, Zolecka already had 60 community members - including 15 men - meeting three days a week to talk about the issue of child sexual violence.

Zolecka knew what she was meant to do to help her community.

And the amazing thing was, Zolecka had no formal education and was only 25 years old.
One of the most effective levers of social change is a woman with the capability, resources, power, courage, and inner commitment to initiate positive change for herself and others.
After an initial feasibility study with Darfur genocide survivors in the refugee camps of Eastern Chad, Global Grassroots’ programs were launched in Rwanda in 2006 with widowed genocide survivors living with HIV/AIDS.
Who We Serve

Global Grassroots serves emerging change agents among vulnerable and undereducated women in post-conflict Africa.

Women bear the greatest burden of war and conflict. Violence and rape used as a weapon of war leave women traumatized, impoverished and stigmatized. Many are also surviving as widows, single mothers and with HIV/AIDS.

At the grassroots level, women often lack both the awareness of their rights and the capacity to enforce them. Women’s voices are limited in the post-conflict reconstruction process, which impacts society’s ability to protect its most vulnerable citizens from future violence.

RWANDA

• Beginning April 6, 1994, in 100 days, one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were brutally murdered throughout Rwanda.

• The UN estimates that 250,000 - 500,000 women and girls were raped during the genocide, 67% of whom contracted HIV.
Who We Serve (cont)

As the primary caretakers of their families and communities, grassroots women have the greatest insight into the social issues facing their communities.

Yet women have the least access to the financial resources, education, skills training and other support needed to advance their ideas for social change.

RWANDA

• Post-genocide, women made up 70% of the population, left to head households and to care for children – their own and those who had been orphaned – alone.

• Much of the population still lives below the national poverty line, lacking access to adequate resources to provide for their daily needs.
Our Mission

Our mission is to unite, empower and support relief of poor, distressed and underprivileged women worldwide.

Our purpose is to catalyze grassroots women change agents to create their own non-profit solutions benefiting women and girls.

Photo by Gretchen Wallace
What We Believe

1. Deepening self-awareness and contributing towards the common good are both essential to social change.

2. The world's most vulnerable women are those most invested in their community's wellbeing and in the greatest need of support to manifest their solutions.

3. The architecture and funding needed to support the advancement of grassroots-level social change is underdeveloped.

4. Mind-body trauma healing plus the opportunity for women to form groups and create community-based organizations to advance social change represents the most effective and holistic approach towards individual and community healing post-conflict.
What We Do

Global Grassroots helps vulnerable women heal from trauma, reclaim their lives and become conscious, ethical community leaders through the creation of their own solutions for social change.

Our core program is the Academy for Conscious Change, an 18 month social venture incubator for grassroots change agents.

Survivors advance their own ideas, demonstrate their value to their community and successfully address the failures of society. This simultaneously supports individual growth, community healing, and post-conflict reconstruction.
The Academy for Conscious Change

Phase 1: Intensive, interactive 40-hour training program:
• conscious, ethical leadership training
• mind-body trauma healing
• social entrepreneurship and non-profit management skills

Phase 2: 3-6 months of hands-on non-profit venture development facilitation and coaching

Phase 3: Seed grants and implementation support

Phase 4: 12-month non-profit apprenticeship with ongoing advisory support
A Success Story

Think About the Young Girls

In 2007, Médiatrice Mushimiyimana was teaching English to the sixth year students (ages 13-16) at Byimana Primary School in rural Rwanda. Many of her female students were struggling in class or dropping out of school, so Médiatrice began to think critically about the issue.

“That made me think about the reason why – to identify the problems the girls are facing. Why are they not passing well in class?”
A Success Story (cont)

Think About the Young Girls

Girls who were menstruating were spied on by boys in the dilapidated latrines shared by both sexes. Boys would walk in on a girl and forcibly remove her clothes or just laugh and taunt her. Girls were not attending school during their periods out of shame and fear of embarrassment. They missed several days each month and fell behind.

“I realized that maybe the problem is that [the girls] don’t feel safe at school all the time.”
A Success Story (cont)

Think About the Young Girls

Médiatrice and her fellow teachers formed a team they named “Think About the Young Girls”, and applied to and attended Global Grassroots’ Academy for Conscious Change.

With their training, they developed a three-pronged solution:
1. New, safe, separate sex school latrines
2. Workshops for parents on reproductive health and girls’ biological needs
3. Workshops for community members and restaurant and bar owners on gender issues and the need for separate sex toilets.

“I think that working on this program, and maybe the whole process, has changed my mind... Now I know that you can plan something.”

- Médiatrice Mushimiyimana


A Success Story (cont)

Think About the Young Girls

Since 2009, Think About the Young Girls has trained nearly 1000 students, parents, teachers and community members in reproductive health issues facing girls.

The venture built new safe latrines and a shower facility, serving 635 girls.

The venture has inspired two new anti-violence clubs started by students and local business owners.

In 2008 only 14.7% of girls had passed their national exams. In 2009, 76% passed. In 2010, 87.5% girls passed the exam.

Think About the Young Girls continues to work to solve obstacles to girls’ education, including violence and malnutrition.

“Boys used to blame girls and spread rumors when they saw blood on girls’ clothes [during menstruation]. Now we are safe.”

- Byimana Primary School Girl
Program Objectives

Our overarching objectives:

• To provide each venture team with all the hard skills needed to create a viable social enterprise addressing a core issue facing women and girls.

• To help women and girls deepen their sense of power, expand their sense of self-awareness, and develop tools for creating social change.

• To accelerate a change agent’s process of personal and societal transformation through training, resources, fellowship and on-going facilitation.
Outcomes Objectives

Our objectives for each venture that completes our 18 month Academy are:

- that all participants will raise their sense of perceived wellbeing, including improvement on their scores for PTSD, by 50%
- that 75% of participants will reach a normalized sense of personal power
- that 75% of teams will have acquired advanced project planning and project management skills
- that at least 80% of all ventures are operating as sustainable civil society organizations within 1 year
- that each project has a measurable impact at the root level of the social issue it is designed to address
- that within 12 months of operations, 75% of teams will apply their social venture skills to solve at least one new social issue in their community, will be planning to expand their operation, and/or will have taught their social entrepreneurship skills to others
MDG # 3: Promote Gender Equality & Empower Women

• Our curriculum deepens a woman’s sense of power to act for social change and provides concrete skills, strengthening her capacity to initiate her own solutions.

• We provide the resources for our teams to promote the physical, educational, social, emotional and financial wellbeing of women and girls in their communities — and to claim the same for themselves.

• We provide educational training, financial resources, and ongoing support to ensure long-term self-sufficiency.

• Our program offers women avenues for earning personal income through the management of their own sustainable non-profits, or “micro-NGOs”.

• Leveraging our leadership and social entrepreneurship tools, our change agents engage in iterative problem-solving to expand their work, teach others, and address other priority issues facing their communities.
Our Impact

Since 2006, Global Grassroots has steadily built a track record of social impact in Rwanda:

300 change agents
21 organizations launched
5 new social ventures in development

Over 15,000 vulnerable women and girls directly served each year by our current venture teams

40,000+ lives touched by ripples of impact, including the children of beneficiaries and the audiences of their awareness work

Photo by Laya Madsen
Our Change Agents

The variety in our program portfolio is significant, because for each initiative, local women and girls set the agenda specific to their own communities’ needs. Each solution is committed to expanding the choices, capacity and opportunities of vulnerable women and girls.

Global Grassroots’ Rwandan ventures work on a range of social issues, including:

- access to clean water
- education of girls
- women’s literacy
- nutrition
- reproductive health
- vocational skills
- gender-based violence
- sexual exploitation
- property rights
- teen pregnancy

Beneficiaries of the GG sponsored water venture, “Have a Good Life”

Photo by Laya Madsen
Underserved, undereducated, and overburdened, the women with whom we work would otherwise lack the resources to promote systemic change. But they have profound wisdom about their communities and innovative ideas for social change.

*Their resilience, courage, and creativity are transforming the world, one community at a time*

Students of the GG sponsored literacy venture, “Let Us Build Ourselves”

Photo by Gretchen Wallace
Your Impact

In partnership with Dining for Women, Global Grassroots will

• Provide seed funding for the launch of three new ventures designed by and for vulnerable women and girls in Rwanda in late 2012.

• Initiate a new Academy for Conscious Change in Rwanda in 2013, with a cohort of 7-10 new teams.
Thank You. Murakoze Cyane.

We embrace the potential of every person to become an agent of change. We thank you for joining us in creating a more just, compassionate and conscious society worldwide.

Dining for Women

Global Grassroots
CONSCIOUS SOCIAL CHANGE FOR WOMEN

Changing the world one dinner at a time

www.globalgrassroots.org