

## **DFW Mid-Year Progress Report**

Due July 31, 2016

Please submit the progress report, photos, and other supporting documentation by loading them to the Dropbox folder assigned to you. We request that reports be attached as MS Word files. Please send an email to [grants@diningforwomen.org](mailto:grants@diningforwomen.org) to confirm these files have been uploaded.

### **1. Please provide the following information:**

- a. Organization Name: Mercado Global
- b. Program Title: Power to Change Program
- c. Grant Amount: \$28,061.99
- d. Contact Person: Sara Pressman
- e. Address: 254 36th Street, Suite C-308, Unit 41, Brooklyn, NY 11232

### **2. Recap briefly what outcomes the program was designed to achieve.**

The “Power to Change” Program seeks to equip indigenous women artisans with the tools and knowledge needed to run their community businesses, invest in the things that matter the most and build healthier lifestyles for their communities.

The projected outcomes include:

- Develop and strengthen community-based training curriculum in partnership with leading global health experts to make topics relevant and impactful for rural indigenous women who fall outside of other health education efforts.
- Empower women to adopt healthy practices in their families and communities, leading to less illness, decreased mortality rates, and increased well-being for their families.
- Increase the number of partner artisans taking leadership roles in their co-ops and communities. Since partnering with Mercado Global, 44% of artisans report holding a leadership position within their communities, such as holding office in their co-ops and participating on school boards.
- Bring in new additional trainer to lead the expansion of the “Power to Change” Program, reaching new and current groups with updated content, and stronger curriculum that addresses the evolving needs of women artisans in taking on more challenging work.

**3. Has funding changed for this program? For example, have you received unexpected funding from another source?**

Funders for the “Power to Change” program originally included the AllPeopleBeHappy Foundation and the Levi Strauss Foundation. To ensure long-term program sustainability, Mercado Global applied for additional grants and received funding for parts of this program and the broader Community-Based Education program from the Belizean Grove/Adventures for the Mind Foundation and Hands on Tzedakah.

**4. Is your organization or program situation different than presented in the approved proposal? For example, new executive director, significant program staffing changes or NGO affiliation, loss of large funding, or other significant changes?**

No, Mercado Global as an organization and its programming has remained essentially the same as presented in the original grant proposal. Our mission to empower indigenous women through market access, education, and asset development continues to drive our work and inform our programming.

**5. What challenges are you facing as you move forward with this project? How are you approaching these challenges?**

Mercado Global faced two major challenges during this grant period: successful adoption of new sanitation practices and a drop in number of beneficiaries working with the organization.

While we have seen many improvements for artisans and their families’ health across the board, there is more that can be done to achieve the second project outcome to, “Empower women to adopt healthy practices in their families and communities, leading to less illness, decreased mortality rates, and increased well-being for their families.” Thanks to the partnership with Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine and University Hospitals Case Western Medical Center, new areas of improvement were identified during their February 2016 and April 2016 trips to Guatemala to work with our partner artisans. These improvements include implementing mother and child health notebooks, connecting artisans to eye care, and creating a partnership to ensure access to clean water.

First, the doctors would like to help artisans create mother and child health notebooks to help artisans track their children’s health and development progress and receive feedback from the doctors during their visits. The team also identified that the “Pain Away” curriculum of the “Power to Change” program could have greater impact through individual assessments to create tailor-made self-care plans. The “Pain Away” curriculum was designed to support musculoskeletal health while alleviating lifestyle and work-related pain among the artisans of Mercado Global. The initial program included four exercises to address cervical and thoracic spine complaints.

Second, the doctors would like Mercado Global to move on creating a partnership with an area NGO to provide eye care and eyeglass access, which Mercado Global is currently exploring.

A third improvement is helping Mercado Global cooperatives and communities gain better access to potable water. In a recent assessment, artisans confirmed that they must buy or treat their own water in order to consume it safely. Eighty percent of artisans interviewed drink chlorinated water (purchased bottled water) and the other 20 percent boil water that arrives through a simple piped system or to a community well or similar source. There continues to be a lack of understanding of the time that water needs to be boiled in order to be potable and safely consumed. The impact of the lack of access to water and understanding is clear, 80 percent of artisans and their families are still suffering from stomach issues like diarrhea on a regular basis. This indicates that lessons from the Five F's curriculum are not being fully understood or implemented by artisans.

To address this need, Mercado Global has started a partnership with a local NGO, EcoFILTRO to provide access to water filters and has developed a new curriculum to better teach artisans about WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) and safe water consumption practices. The module is called, "Importance of Potable Water" and it is ready to implement in partner communities. However, to make this module most effective, water filters also need to be made available to artisans for use in their homes.

The second major challenge the organization faced in implementing the project during this reporting period is a drop in artisan participation. Over the past two years, changes in the market have caused Mercado Global to experience a drop in international sales. As our previous program structure heavily focused on providing training to support international market access, we experienced a decrease in program participation with reduced sales. In order to address this, Mercado Global began a restructuring program starting almost one year ago with the following components:

- 1) *Expanding international market access:* We brought in the former head of accessories at Eileen Fisher to serve as our Creative Director and help us rebrand and redesign our artisans' collections so that they can better compete internationally. We also built a Fashion Advisory Board with C-level executives and seasoned industry veterans to expand our connections in the industry and provide access to market pulse information in real time. Additionally, we began building more direct to consumer sales partnerships, such as the new sales partnership we have begun with Dining for Women. Early signs are that this restructuring will help us grow sales going forward. Since this initiative began, we have nearly doubled direct to consumer sales and established major sales partnerships with companies such as Garnet Hill, Restoration Hardware and Nordstrom.
- 2) *Restructuring our community based education program to provide training for accessing both the international and the domestic market:* This shift to providing both domestic and international market training has allowed us to expand our impact and programming to more communities, even when sales are not as robust as we would like. Over the past year we piloted providing our community based education programming with a focus just on domestic market access to 100 new artisans. This shifted focus is ensuring artisans have a more diversified income stream and is allowing us to help more women at all levels of international sales.

**6. Have you revised your original objectives since the project began? If so, why? What are your new objectives?**

The original objectives from the grant remain in place. However, as this grant was submitted in 2014, we have since expanded the health curriculum to include more education and training on nutrition, reproductive health, and forthcoming water filters as part of the sanitation curriculum, to make a greater impact on artisans and their families' health and wellbeing.

Additionally, we will be adjusting the number of target beneficiaries. Over the course of this grant period, we have reached 180 women with this training program, 100 were new Mercado Global participants. In the next 6 months, we aim to reach an additional 80 artisans with our training program. As part of our restructuring, we will continue bring our model to more women over the coming year beyond this grant timeline.

**7. What progress have you made toward achieving your objectives? Please address each stated objective.**

Below are the original objectives as well as the progress made toward each:

1. Double the number of community-based training sessions that artisans take part in during the month, from one to two monthly classes.
  - Currently, trainers Olga Morales and Aurora Matzar Lopez visit each partner community twice per month to lead all technical and education trainings from the convenience of artisans' homes. Each partner community receives one education training and one technical training per month. Education trainings are comprised of four key areas of core curriculum including health, leadership, business development and entrepreneurship, and financial management.
  - Dining For Women's investment is proving to have a clear impact through trainings delivered in partner communities. In the first six months of this grant, trainers have covered all activities and topics within the Self-Esteem track including *Be the Change*, *Community Cowers*, *Get Started*, *Breaking Down Barriers*, and *Putting It Together*. When combined, these trainings provide holistic empowerment tools for women to bring into their homes and communities. This grant period has also covered half of the Health Track activities and topics including *Pain Away and Physical Exercises* and *Sanitation and Hygiene*. Each training starts with *Pain Away* to remind artisans to do certain stretches and exercises each morning to help with flexibility and muscle pain. Within all health and nutrition trainings, *Sanitation and Hygiene* is taught in relation to cooking and general family health.

The remaining six months of this grant will cover the rest of the Health Track topics which include *Water Treatment* and *Support Sessions for Stress and Mental Health* as well as continue to enforce the Self-Esteem topics. The *Water Treatment* course will be carried out with NGO partner, EcoFILTRO, to provide access to water filters and created a curriculum to better teach

artisans about WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) and safe water consumption practices, the module is called, “Importance of Potable Water”. The *Support Sessions for Stress and Mental Health* will be a focus of the last quarter of the year as we continue to develop the curriculum for mental health education. All trainings are group activities that are designed to innately serve as support systems for all members of the cooperative. Trainings either begin or end with an open discussion where women can share challenges and seek advice.

2. Incorporate the position of Community Training Program Manager, who can lead and support the implementation of new training sessions and grow the program.

- This position was originally intended to be a manager position, but the organization had a greater need for an additional and more advanced trainer to increase our ability to implement more trainings. Olga Morales serves as a lead trainer for the Community-Based Education program. Her fluency in English, Spanish and three Mayan languages makes her invaluable, as well as her experience in implementing agricultural workshops in the rural highlands. Now that this position is in place, we are actively seeking a third member of the Community-Based Education Team, a Community Training Program Manager to hire within the next couple months. Ideally, we are seeking a candidate from the Highlands of Guatemala with a Bachelors or Masters degree that is fluent in at least one indigenous language. As previously stated, this position will be in charge of monthly reporting to the Programs Director, Executive Director, and Development team, creating new curriculum, maintaining monitoring and evaluation systems, and annual planning. The Program Manager will absorb these responsibilities from the Trainers, allowing them to conduct more in-community training and better support current and new artisan groups.

3. Reach 40 new indigenous women artisans with these trainings, and continue to deliver and reinforce content to 370 current artisans.

As mentioned previously, we have had to adjust our target beneficiary number due to major changes in the retail market. We are proud to share that over the course of this grant period, we reached 180 women with this training program and 100 were new Mercado Global participants, 60 more new artisans than our original new artisan goal. In the next 6 months, we aim to reach an additional 80 artisans with our training program. As part of our restructuring, we will continue bring our model to more women over the coming year, offering them the tools and skills to help lift themselves out of poverty through education and market access.

4. Maintain or increase the 44% rate of partner artisans holding leadership positions in their communities within a period of three years.

- Due to the bi-monthly trainings, Mercado Global is proud to see that 84% of MG artisans are currently in a leadership position, in comparison with 44% of artisans in 2013. Power to Change trainings ultimately help women understand the root of stressful issues and help them to find viable solutions to manage stress. These classes emphasize the supportive role of the group and guides women towards making informed decisions about the immediate and long-term prosperity of their communities. This guidance and empowerment helps women to realize

their potential as respected community members and leaders through decision-making, conflict resolution, and navigating gender dynamics modules.

- Artisan Impact Story:

Through continued participation in our Community-Based Education Program trainings, Cristobalina Colaj Mux, one of our partner artisans, has become a respected leader in her community and her cooperative in Comalapa. Cristobalina has become an advocate for our programs and makes it a point to share everything she learns with all seven of her children. Cristobalina has told Mercado Global that she finds the most value in the Power to Change trainings because they teach her the confidence she never knew she had.

Cristobalina said, "Every day I wake up so thankful for Mercado Global, the work they provide to me, and the new chance they provided for my family. It's something I will never take for granted. These trainings have taught me about leadership and self-confidence, and I feel more empowered after every training. I learned it's never too late to make a change".

5. Decrease preventable diseases through adoption of healthy behaviors for women and families, and increase support available for mental health issues.

In February and April 2016, over the course of the four-day visits to partner communities, doctors from Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine and University Hospitals Case Western Medical Center led discussions, skit reenactments of conversations between doctors and 'patients,' group exercises, and performed individual health assessments. The findings from the recent April 2016 trip have informed new initiatives for the organization on WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) and eye care and eyeglasses access, as previously mentioned.

Our recent Social Impact Assessment indicated that artisans are experiencing much higher levels of food security with 73% of artisans saying they always have enough to eat, as compared to only 59% in 2013. General health has increased as well, with 95% of MG artisans having vaccinated their children and 67% of MG artisans seeking medical treatment from professionals (hospital/clinic), which increased from 62% in 2013.

Women are continually adopting healthier behaviors in relation to their diets, their homes, and what they are feeding their children. We are proud to show increased progress over time and are excited to implement the recommendations from Case Western Reserve University Medical School to provide more targeted support to our artisans.

**8. Do you anticipate any difficulties in completing your project in the timeframe outlined in your proposal?**

We do not foresee any difficulties in completing the Power to Change Program. We plan to complete trainings within the Self-Esteem and Health tracks that are aimed to both empower artisans and ensure their mental health and well-being.

**Within the report also include:**

**Several high-resolution JPG photographs of the program depicting the women/girls who have benefited from the grant funds should be posted to your assigned Dropbox. Include confirmation of grantee's right and consent to use photos/videos as per local law.**

In Dropbox.

**Any message you would like us to convey to our membership and donors about the impact our grant is having on those being served and/or your organization and its mission.**

Support from Dining for Women allows Mercado Global to address the needs of one of the most marginalized communities in the world. Our indigenous partner communities have endured extreme poverty, a civil war, ongoing discrimination, and a lack of economic and educational opportunities. Forty-eight percent of the rural indigenous population lives in extreme poverty, earning an average of \$1.25 or less per day.

Through Mercado Global's model and the Power to Change program, indigenous women in Guatemala are empowered to transform their lives. Dining for Women's support has allowed Mercado Global to invest in this program, expanding class offerings and hiring key staff. This has in turn led to new women participating in the program, greater leadership among artisans, increased food security and nutrition, and more artisans vaccinating their children.

With access to education and income, these women can forge sustainable solutions to endemic poverty on their own terms. Dining for Women is an important partner in offering women and their families in Guatemala a better tomorrow.

**Detailed list of all expenses incurred during the reporting period which have been paid for with the Dining for Women grant.**

**Project leadership and oversight by Guatemala Programs Director - \$1,250**

*Six months of 25% portion of the Programs Director's salary/time dedicated*

**Project execution by Program Manager - \$13,020**

*Six months of program manager dedicated to implementing and overseeing this project*

**Community-Based Travel for Manager - \$240**

*Six months lowest-cost travel options in-country (local busses and tuk-tuks)*

**Project execution by Program trainer - \$4380**

*Six months portion of program trainer dedicated to this project - \$730/month*

**Community-based travel for trainer -\$366**

*Includes lowest-cost travel options in-country (local busses and tuk-tuks). \$61/month for 12 months*

**Design and development of visual manual for trainer - \$875**

*Labor involved with developing visual leave-behind manual for artisans with limited literacy, includes partnering with Case Western Reserve Global Health Track doctors for activity build-out*

**Printing of training materials - \$360**

*Local printing of manuals at \$2 each*