
Her Future Coalition - DFW Grant Interim Progress Report

November, 2019



Project Overview

Project Title: Red Light Area Resource Centers

Grant Amount: \$49,200

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Intended Outcomes:

Our primary goal through this grant was to expand and support our three Red Light Area Resource Centers in Kolkata - to provide job training, employment, counseling, and informal education for women trapped in forced prostitution, as well as education, counseling, safe space, and therapeutic arts for their children. The expansion of the Resource Centers enables us to:

- Increase the number of children in education support programs and enhance our education programs with additional materials and instructional staff
- Add additional education programs, including English
- Increase the number of women in vocational training programs
- Continue infrastructure improvements to increase the capacity and number of people served (to 250 women and children)
- Develop and implement program measurement, data collection, and monitoring programs
- Expand program capacity to provide increased services to 250 women and children

Changes to the Project/Organization

There have been no changes to the organization, project or to the project funding since receiving the grant from DFW. Her Future continues to provide additional funding to the project from our general budget (about \$15,000 exclusive of our general staff time/salary percentage).

The number of beneficiaries directly and indirectly impacted by this project is slightly higher than anticipated: the three centers are serving 270 children and 77 women (250 total was our goal with the grant).

Challenges & Solutions

We have faced several new challenges with this project. Part of this project is a vocational training program in goldsmithing - a field in which HFC has trained many survivors in the past, at various shelters and workshops in Nepal and India. However, this was the first time we have offered this type of training directly *in* a red light area.

The Red Light Resource Centers are relatively small, multi-use facilities. The building in which we offered the jewelry training serves over a hundred women and children each day, and it was just one room and a courtyard when we started. Working with metals and open flames is not safe to do when there are a lot of people - especially children - running around. Needless to say, we did not want to kick the children out of the space so we could teach jewelry. It took many months - during which we focused on the safer skills of beading and wire-bending - but eventually we were able to build a second floor on the building, move the children's programs upstairs, and create a separate space for the jewelry team to safely work on all the skills of goldsmithing.

Another challenge, which we are still trying to overcome, is a human resource issue. Soma Seal, the trainer and program manager for the jewelry program, also trains, supervises, and handles social work at our other jewelry center in Kolkata. As soon as Soma began training at the Resource Centers, she realized that the women there have higher needs than the women in the other program, and she needed to go there 3-4 times a week, both for teaching and for counseling and moral support.

Some of these women are only just getting out of the sex trade. Almost all have grown up in the red light area and have high levels of trauma. Trafficking and prostitution are normalized for them - they did not previously imagine any other kind of life. Extreme trauma affects short term memory, and makes learning slower. Soma is still trying to figure out the balance, and we have just promoted another woman from the program to pick up some of Soma's work so she can focus more on the trainees at the Resource Center and give them women there all the attention and care that they need.

Progress

We have not revised our original objectives since the project began. We have made significant progress towards our stated objectives:

- 1. Increase the number of children in education support programs and enhance our education programs with additional materials and instructional staff**

We have been able to increase the number of children in preschool, remedial education and school support programs from 180 to 270-. We have provided five new laptops and added lending libraries to two of the three centers.

2. Add additional education programs, especially English language instruction

3 additional teachers have been appointed. 1 part time teacher has been replaced with a full time teacher. We also had brought study materials and a science experiment kit (lab kit). We brought in a consultant educationist/ resource person to revisit the teaching pedagogy at the centers. All teachers received a training to align their capacity in order to customize education support to the children. We added computers and computer training, and created lending libraries at two of the center, at which we offer weekly library arts and reading classes. To further encourage children to read beyond text books an exposure visit to The Kolkata Book Fair was organized and each child was given an allowance to buy books. We have added two English teachers, and launched a computer training program at one of the centers

3. Increase the number of women in our vocational training programs

We have added 18 women to the vocational training programs, 8 in goldsmithing and 10 in cooking/catering. 7 women from the community who work as staff members at the centers are also supported through this grant.

4. Continue infrastructure improvement which will increase the capacity and number of people served

We built a second floor on one of the centers, doubling the capacity of that center, and making it possible to run vocational trainings on the ground floor. We also built jewelry desks and added cabinets so that the jewelry trainees could have a safe and separate place to work.

5. Develop and implement program measurement, data collection, and monitoring programs

We determined that we did not have sufficient staff capacity to do this ourselves, so we are now engaging a professional with extensive experience in data collection and impact measurement - Paromita Chowdhury - to create a data collection and impact measurement system for the Resource Centers. We will share her plan and initial findings in our final grant report.

6. Expand program capacity to provide increased services to 250 women and children

We have been able to grow and improve the Red Light Resource Centers and to provide more and better services to 340 women and children

This is the message we would like to convey to the DFW community:

Through the generosity of Dining for Women, we have been able to grow and improve our Red Light Resource Centers in Kolkata, and are now able to provide comprehensive services to 340 women and children. This program keeps children safe, it enables them to get an education to break the cycle of poverty and exploitation, and it enables families to stay together. These centers make it possible for mothers - who are themselves victims of the most severe forms of gender violence - to take care of their children and to build a better future for themselves and their children. It is transforming communities.