



FOUNDATION FOR
THE REALIZATION OF
ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT

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FREE is a faith-based Christian developmental organization committed to empowering women to rise above poverty.

FREE is a 501(c)3 organization with tax exempt status.

A tax receipt will be issued at year end for your contributions.

Zambia Update

March/April 2014

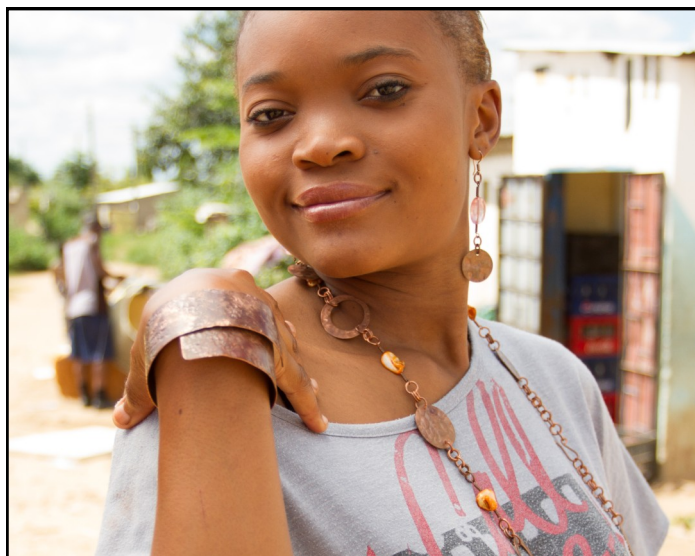
Marketing Our Products

I learned the first year I was in Zambia that while developing a marketable product can be incredibly challenging, the real clincher is getting the product to market. The same issue has been ongoing with the jewelry project. Our sales have been occasional to date. We have a marketable product but the women don't earn anything until it sells. I've seen eCommerce as the solution to tapping the US market but costs to build a website have been prohibitive and promises of assistance have fallen by the wayside. That story is changing with the advent of Pat Hodge, a web designer based in Brooklyn, NY. I got in contact with Pat when my roommate had a visit from her good friend Angela Hill who is an investigative reporter with

ABC News. Angela visited the project and immediately started filming interviews with the women, using her iPhone. She just couldn't resist hearing their stories. Angela told Pat about us and she got on board to put the website together. She said it will probably be the most exciting project she'll work on the entire year. I kept pressing Pat for a figure on her fee. She finally told me—\$50! Praise God! May the Lord bless you abundantly, Pat! With website photos in mind, I hired a professional photographer from my church, Steven Mwale, and we had a photo shoot at the project two weeks ago. My goal was to present the women and their jewelry in their own environment. The photos reflect the reality of life in the compound but the beauty



Margaret, wearing her upcycled copper necklace and earrings.



Anita, at the photo shoot, modeling the copper cuff she makes. It's cut and hammered from an old hot water heater.

of the women and what they've accomplished shines above the grunge. I was so impressed with how they carried themselves and how comfortable most of them were in front of the camera. Steven did an excellent job and I'm very happy with the outcome.

With assistance from Maria Townsend, one of my professors from Pitt, Alisha Chaffey of Pittsburgh has joined the team to warehouse, pack and ship the jewelry. The first stock arrived on her doorstep a week ago. Locally, we recently placed the jewelry in two shops with more to follow. Kutowa Designs is a Zambian fashion design house and has a considerable amount of traffic. We put a full display of the jewelry on consignment. Two of the project women will monitor the display and we will



collect sales monthly. Kutowa is pretty excited about our progress with the jewelry and are going to promote it through their Facebook page as they have about 5,000 followers. There's a new shop called The Green Café which has opened near Ng'ombe Compound where the jewelry is made. We thought they might be interested in our jewelry as it is recycled and copper is very symbolic of Zambia. I believe the shop was opened through a grant from the Nordic Development Fund to promote local environmentally friendly products. We met with the manager and within 30 seconds he said he'd take 20 pieces to see how

they sold. We will get paid in full after 30 days. I shared this with my roommates who immediately made plans to do some shopping at the Green Café as soon as the jewelry is on display. I suggested they could buy straight from me but they explained that it would be better to buy from the shop and convince them of the demand for the jewelry. I have awesome roommates!

The day after the jewelry was placed at Kutowa I got a rather frantic call from a woman named Adobe who'd seen our

jewelry and wanted to know if I'd collaborate in exports to the US. I thought a meeting was in order before I made any decision... So we (Margaret K., Margaret P. and I) met her that same day, at her insistence. She said she is working with Lauren Bush's company to supply shoes, handbags, and accessories with an African flair. She said they want stock for upper end stores and Target. That seems to me to be on opposite ends of the spectrum. She talked about FEED bags. I had no clue who or what she was talking about when she was dropping the names. The Margarets were sure she wasn't legitimate. That night I did some Googling and all her stories checked out. Lauren Bush is the niece of former president George Bush. She is married to Ralph Lauren's son. She was formerly a fashion model and yes, has her own fashion line featuring African clothes. Her FEED Projects sells bags made in Kenya, the proceeds of which provide meals. I've seen the bags at Godiva. I also made a



phone call to get a reference on Adobe.

The end result of all this is that we will send samples of our jewelry with Adobe when she meets with Lauren Bush's buyers in NYC in July.

I believe the day will come when our products will be in demand in such circles. God can open amazing doors we could never dream of. We will be diligent to do our part to get there with a great product and lots of hard work.



Literacy Project Update

The literacy project has successfully taught women to read though the numbers in attendance have dwindled. The reasons are many and varied. Funerals in rural areas can take one away for a month. Some have found jobs. Women are



One of the students confidently reads to her classmates.



University of Zambia student Precious Buumba has very capably taught these women to read in the course of three months.

expected to stay at home and cook for their husbands rather than attend a night class.

The other issue is the financial outlay which I'd not planned for. We'd hoped the classes could be sustained through charging fees each term but

that doesn't seem likely. I had a rather sad discussion about it with Precious. The project will continue for two months when we'll reassess whether it is feasible and beneficial to continue.

Mail donations to:
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Sewing Project to Transition

FREE was given a sausage making machine by government in 2011. I've been waiting for opportunity to put it to use. The Garden women have been learning sausage making through Community Development and we've identified local markets.

The sewing project will continue to produce handbags for website sales but will turn toward sausage for local markets to sustain their income. I'm really quite eager to try making pepperoni to market to the pizza chains. They don't have the real thing!