

Proposed Target Project: *Free The Girls: Fight Human Trafficking*

Brief Project Description:

Free The Girls provides economic empowerment through sustainable employment opportunities for women and girls rescued from sex trafficking in developing countries. They do this by helping trafficking survivors set up micro-enterprises in the second-hand clothing markets prevalent in developing countries, wherein the women sell bras donated by women and industry partners in North America and Europe. *Free The Girls* works with established safe houses and aftercare programs, and provides free job training and an initial inventory of bras to help the women set up their own business. Women purchase additional inventory from *Free The Girls* and that money is used to cover the in-country costs of storage, import, and transportation. Once a program is launched, it quickly becomes self-sustaining through the sale of inventory. The women work only with other women, so they are insulated from the demographic that exploited them in the past. They have flexible hours allowing them to care for their children and return to school and, in most cases, they are making 3-5 times the local minimum wage. *Free The Girls* also believes that all women should have the basic human dignity of owning and wearing properly fitting undergarments.

Specific Project Objectives:

Free The Girls seeks funding from FAWCO to create the infrastructure needed to fully support their program expansion into Kenya, Uganda and El Salvador. They currently have one paid part-time position and a strong core of 100 volunteers in the US, providing hundreds of hours of time, plus considerable pro bono services. While this model worked since 2010, *Free the Girls* saw a huge amount of growth in 2013 and now needs to establish domestic facilities to match the growth and additional paid staff positions to provide leadership, consistency, and accountability. Funding includes:

- Expansion of inventory storage facilities
- Modest part-time salaried positions for: 1) Global Director - oversight of programs, 2) Volunteer Coordinator - to prevent turnover of high-functioning volunteers, 3) National Director: oversight of domestic operation/securement of long-term funding, and 4) International Program Manager: oversight of international operations.

How will the project improve the lives of women?

- Victims of sex trafficking are often lured from their families as young as the age of 10 with the promise of education, employment, or marriage, only to find themselves trapped in a life of prostitution.
- Once rescued, victims often find themselves trapped by a new set of circumstances where they are uneducated, unemployed, and unwelcome to return home to their families. Safe houses and aftercare programs report that their biggest challenge is finding sustainable employment for their clients.
- Through economic empowerment, *Free The Girls* reduces the possibility of these women returning to the streets to make money to support themselves.
- Through the efforts of the women in their program, *Free The Girls* makes the dignity of owning and wearing a properly fitting bra available to thousands of women living in urban population centers of developing countries.

Who will carry out the project?

Free The Girls mission is to provide economic empowerment through sustainable employment opportunities for women and girls rescued from sex trafficking in developing countries. It was founded in 2010 as a limited liability company (LLC) and is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt non-profit corporation. *Free The Girls* is headquartered in Denver, Colorado. They have been working in Mozambique, Africa since August 2010 and are currently expanding into three additional countries.

Project Budget:

\$157,200 over two years. Less money possible, but necessitates a very tight schedule. More funds = faster expansion into additional new areas.

Multidisciplinary nature of project – Which UN Millennium Development Goals are addressed?:

- Target 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women: reduction of poverty and ending violence against women.
- Target 8: Global Partnership for Development: serving the special needs of the poorest, Sub Saharan countries; addressing special needs of landlocked countries; and improving the trade climate of developing countries.
- In addition, vastly improved economic circumstances bring corresponding improvements in health, women being able to return to school, and a positive impact on the next generation.