Just One Small Step

You never know where you may end up just by taking one small step. Then doing it again.

I’m a stay-at-home mom with four young children. How could I possibly be a part of transforming the lives of women and children in East Africa? To be honest, it started simply by deciding I wanted to. Then I asked myself, what is one small step I can take?

The answer, it turned out, was to stop going out to a restaurant with my Bible study each week, and instead to suggest we do a potluck and donate to Crisis Aid the amount we would have given in tips. Within a few months we’d donated enough to cover 500 meals in East Africa. (Did you know that starvation is a key reason children are sold into slavery? Because it’s the family’s last hope to keep their children alive.)

I was making for fun anyway, and donating the proceeds.

Soon my “little” steps were getting bigger and stronger... The first year I’d donated enough to support 5 women rescued from sex trafficking. The next year it was 10. Then I wanted to meet some staff, to hear real stories from people who were doing this work. Then I was invited to travel to East Africa to see first-hand the difference we were making.

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Before I knew it, I was standing in a serving line, dishing up food for a huge crowd of friends & family of rescued women who were graduating from their vocational training program at Mercy Chapel. I was looking directly into the eyes of women “not yet rescued”, women who were celebrating with their friends this afternoon, but tonight would step back into the doorway of their variegated tin shed—just big enough for a bed—and sell their bodies for $2.

Each time I remember that trip, I want to do just one more small step. Just one more. To date, I’ve raised enough money to support and re-train 43 women.

One Life Impacted, Thanks to You!

In 2019, Bahiya finished her year-long training in weaving at Mercy Chapel in the Red Light District. In 2020 she married Yazid and they’ve now moved out of the city. Yazid is working at the dairy operation at TESIFA, and Bahiya is selling her weaving at the local market. They’re delighted to share that they’re pregnant, and looking forward to welcoming another child into their family.

Red Light District Update: Vocational Training Continues

When COVID reached East Africa, we knew Mercy Chapel would be closed. But we coordinated diligently with the local government, and enabled 53 young women to graduate! These girls now have marketable skills in hairdressing, silk-screen printing, computers, weaving, leather crafts, and sewing.

Moving forward, Crisis Aid will continue this vital work through two Mercy Chapel Vocational Centers instead of just the one. This strategic move to new locations offers stability and flexibility for the programs, to ensure they remain available to help women gain the new skills they need to break free from the bondage of survival sex work.
TESIKA Update

Thanks to you, the TESIKA food program, agricultural training and medical clinic all took huge strides forward in 2020.

- The dairy started the year with 20 cows and has now grown to 51 cows and 4 girls from the Red Light District are now working full-time at the dairy store.

- Last year we’ve more than doubled the people fed per month, going from 4,800 before COVID to now almost 10,000 people per month.

- A generator was purchased to enable the food grining mill to open in November, three months ahead of schedule. We can currently grind enough of the wheat, corn and chickpea blend for the entire Crisis Aid feeding program in East Africa.

- Unfortunately, the mill is still not at 100% capacity, because we’re limited by access to electricity. The government has committed to extend the grid to our location, but until then we are operating just on the power supply from the generator. Once we have access to a full power supply, TESIKA will be able to provide increased milling capacity, plus a free public toilet & shower.

- 800 fruit trees have been planted: avocado, banana, pineapple and others. This is the first step in teaching good agricultural techniques and providing the community with healthy fruit.

- In response to the unprecedented need, extra medical clinic staff are working five days a week at health outpost centers around the region, caring for those unable to make the trip to the TESIKA medical facility.

- Pastors throughout the region are identifying families in dire need, educating them about Covid safety and connecting them to feeding programs.

- In February 2021, through the Pastors’ Project, about 500 people were scheduled to be baptized, with another 500 expected to be baptized in March.
Survivor Support Update: Remember Cara?

Cara arrived in our office in the St. Louis police department in 2020. **Crisis Aid supplied her with emergency housing and a support team around her.** You may also remember that she wrote poetry, including one special poem called “From Cocoon to Butterfly”. Well, Cara is still writing poetry and is looking forward to the summer. She’s doing great, working with her team, but she does still struggle with recurring nightmares. That’s the reality of a journey of healing.

But Cara is just one success story from Crisis Aid. Compiling data from our first year embedded with law enforcement in St. Louis, we found that, of the trafficked and extreme-risk youth referred to us, 89% now have stable or improved living situations substantially reducing their risk for trafficking. This is such great news, that other law enforcement jurisdictions and even schools have been reaching out to Crisis Aid for help and training.

**Any gift you give towards girls like Cara will immediately be doubled!**

A matching grant to support survivors is ongoing until October 31, 2021.