

# Right Sharing OF WORLD RESOURCES

*"Let us then see what love can do"*

*William Penn, 17th Century Quaker*

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*God calls us to the right sharing of world resources, from the burdens of materialism and poverty into the abundance of God's love, to work for equity through partnership with our sisters and brothers throughout the world.*

## Lives Changed in India

In 2015, RSWR was able to give grants totaling \$215,000 to fund 43 groups, which supported 1,257 women to start small businesses. Although the statistics are impressive, what speaks to us and touches our hearts is the personal stories of the women beneficiaries. In February 2016, incoming RSWR Clerk Bruce Birchard and General Secretary Jackie Stillwell visited 24 RSWR projects in India in 2½ weeks. In this issue of the newsletter, we share stories of some of the women they met.

The most common work for poor women in India is as day laborers on farms owned by higher caste (and wealthier) people. This is seasonal work, 150 or so days per year, and the pay is 100 to 150 rupees per day (\$1.50 to \$2.30). Others get work as unskilled laborers on construction projects (roads, buildings), which can be dangerous and pays about the same as agricultural work.

RSWR gives grants of approximately \$5,000 to local NGOs (non-governmental organizations) to enable them to make loans to poor women organized into Self Help groups. With a loan of \$100 to \$200, women are able to start small businesses that can double or triple their income. Such a loan enables them to buy a sewing machine and start a small tailoring business, or buy a cow and sell the surplus milk, or set up a small stall along a village street to sell vegetables or flowers or snacks. Ninety-eight percent of loan recipients repay their loans in full and on time. As payments are received, the money is loaned again to new women. In this way, the funds are recycled to many women in the community. The NGOs provide training for the women, as well as education in women's issues and women's rights. Here are some stories of women whom Jackie and Bruce met, whose lives have been changed because of a RSWR grant.

*Continued on page 2*



*Bruce Birchard and Jackie Stillwell with beneficiaries and their children.*

### In a tiny office

in the town of Natrampalli, Mrs. Umashankari, Director of the NGO Rural Woman's Development Trust, presented a powerpoint to Jackie and Bruce about what they had done with four RSWR grants received over the past eight years. She could document every loan to every woman, their repayments, and how the repaid loans had been recycled. Starting in 2008 with four Self-Help Groups and 30 loan recipients, they have now served 36 groups and helped a total of 3,800 people. All this has been accomplished with approximately \$18,000 from RSWR. And they are not done yet!



*NGO leader, Mrs. Umashankari and Jackie*

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN SIERRA LEONE, INDIA AND KENYA

In 2015, RSWR gave grants totaling \$215,000 to fund 43 groups, which supported 1,257 women to start small businesses.



*Manaka with her children*

### MANAKA'S STORY

Manaka is a young woman who lives with her husband and two small children in a room 18 by 9 feet (162 feet square). They pay 650 rupees (\$10.00) per month to rent their home with electricity, a two-burner gas stove, and one bed. They do not have running water or an indoor toilet. With a loan of \$165, plus \$45 from her own savings, and several days of training in both tailoring and entrepreneurship (including simple accounting), Manaka purchased a sewing machine and began making clothes for people in her village. Prior to getting her RSWR loan, she sewed piecework for a small factory, where the pay was low and the bosses difficult; moreover, she often had to be away from her children.

Now Manaka makes about 5,500 rupees per month (\$85.00 – nearly twice what she made working for the factory) and can easily keep an eye on her children while sewing. She just received a second loan from the recycled RSWR money, with which she plans to buy a special machine to sew hems, plus a supply of fabrics. Manaka is rightfully proud of her abilities, her business, and the new life she is creating for her family.

### NAGARATINAMMA'S STORY

Nagaratinamma and her husband were both agricultural laborers. They lived with their two sons in government housing for the poor. One of the boys has health problems, and his medicines are costly. When Nagaratinamma's husband died unexpectedly, the family was plunged into poverty. She didn't know how she could continue to support her boys and keep them in school on her tiny income. Then she joined a Self Help group promoted by the NGO SHARP, which recently received a grant from Right Sharing. Nagaratinamma was one of the first to get a loan, along with training on business management. When Bruce and Jackie met her, she had just begun her business selling doughnuts and breakfast items by the roadside. She expressed her delight and thanks for this opportunity to make a better life for herself and her children.



*Nagaratinamma sells donuts and breakfast items.*



*Sathiya in her tailoring shop.*

### SATHIYA'S STORY

Sathiya is a 23-year-old differently-abled woman, about 4 feet 10 inches tall and 90 pounds, who walks with the support of crutches. In order to start her small tailoring business with her new sewing machine, she found two other women loan recipients to join her in renting a room in a small building in their village. The other women sell rice, snack foods, spices, and school supplies. They are there for Sathiya when she needs help, such as when purchasing fabric or moving heavier items. Sathiya now supports herself on the approximately \$8 per week she makes from her tailoring business.

Sadly, not long after starting her business, Sathiya was sexually assaulted. Men who commit this kind of crime in rural India usually get away with it. But in Sathiya's case, the women in her Self-Help Group demanded that the man be arrested. When the police failed to take action, they organized 80 women to demonstrate outside the police station. Local media began covering the story, and the police felt compelled to arrest the man.

As this story illustrates, the changes in women's lives are not only financial. The increased confidence women experience as they succeed in running their own businesses, along with training from the NGOs in women's empowerment issues and the sense of solidarity gained by being part of a Self Help group, often work together to create significant social change.

### MUTHULAKSHMI'S STORY



*Muthulakshmi and her husband work together to provide healthy food in their community.*

Jackie and Bruce met Muthulakshmi selling organic health foods in a public park. She is a member of a Self Help group organized by NESAM Trust, an NGO that specializes in teaching people to use herbs and cook healthful food. Diabetes and malnutrition are prevalent diseases among poor people in India because of low-quality carbohydrate-based diets.

Muthulakshmi rises at 3 a.m. to begin preparing food – grains, cooked millet, sprouted beans, juices, and a multi-grain drink. She sells food in the park beginning with the breakfast rush, taking a break to be with her children after school, and then returning home at 8 p.m. She serves food on biodegradable plates that are composted. Muthulakshmi's husband has been very supportive of her business, and now works alongside her, helping with preparation, transportation, and sales. They live a kilometer from the park and transport huge containers of food by bicycle. Together, they net about \$4.50 per day, while teaching many how to enjoy healthy food.

# Transformation in Kenya & Sierra Leone

Kenya ranks 74th among world economies and Sierra Leone is 151st. Sierra Leone is recovering from ten years of civil war and, more recently, the devastating Ebola epidemic, while Kenya continues to struggle with tribal tensions and government corruption. Amidst these hardships, people somehow carry on, feed their families, and educate their children. Instead of working through NGOs as we do in India, RSWR works more directly with the women beneficiaries in these two countries. In Kenya, we support women's groups organized by churches, mostly by the United Society of Friends Women. In Sierra Leone, we support women's cooperatives organized in villages.

## MIRIAM'S STORY



*Miriam and her son in front of her new house.*

Miriam is a member of a group in Kapsabet, Kenya, that includes three different tribes. Miriam, her husband, and small child lived in a tiny rented house, struggling to get by. Then the women's group at Miriam's church received a micro-grant from Right Sharing of World Resources. With a loan to buy chickens, Miriam made money selling the eggs. After a year or so, she was able to save enough of her egg money to begin a business selling used clothing. With the increase in her monthly income and savings, she was able to return to school and study to become a teacher. Today she teaches primary school in her town and is a respected member of her community. She and her husband have purchased a house of their own, with a big backyard where she grows vegetables to sell. She is currently studying to upgrade her teaching credentials.

## NANCY'S STORY

After having polio as a young child, Nancy learned to walk with crutches. To earn her living, she sewed dresses and school uniforms by hand. Then her Quaker women's group received a micro-grant from RSWR. With a small loan, Nancy bought a sewing machine and had it fitted with a hand crank, because she is not able to use a foot treadle. Now she can make twice as many dresses and uniforms per day, so her income has doubled. Nancy proudly sends her daughter to school. With her savings, she has opened a beauty shop and is training two young people to be beauticians. Nancy is a role model in her community of how determination, hard work, and service to others can transform a life.



*Nancy at work in her tailoring shop.*

## MBALU GBLU'S STORY



*MWDO members model their Country Cloth.*

Mbalu Gblu is a member of Makolo Women Development Organization (MWDO) in Sierra Leone, which received an RSWR grant in July 2015. Her husband died as a result of the Ebola virus, leaving her with 6 children to raise. Her work fishing, and cutting and selling firewood, barely provided for her children. She was not able to make enough money to send the children to school or to get them needed medical help. MWDO teaches the members of its group to weave "country cloth." Mbalu worked hard to learn how to weave the cloth and became very skilled at it. Now she is making a good income by traveling to neighboring villages to sell her cloth. In the short time since she received her loan, she has made enough money to repay it and send two of her children to school.

## HAWA BANGURA'S STORY

Hawa Bangura is a member of Destitute Women's Development Group in Sierra Leone. She is an Ebola survivor who lost 11 members of her family to the disease. Because of the stigma of having had Ebola and being the only one who survived, she was very depressed and isolated herself from others. But the staff of DWDG worked to bring her back into society and give her a reason to live. She received a loan and encouragement to participate with the group. Now she joins in the group discussions and contributes greatly to the development of the organization by leading the post-Ebola reintegration team.

## RIGHT SHARING of WORLD RESOURCES

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## *Impact Generations!*

Help a woman in India, Kenya or Sierra Leone have a life-changing story to tell! There are many ways to donate to Right Sharing.

Visit our website:

<http://www.rswr.org/donors>



## *Recycle Stamps to Benefit Right Sharing!*

Since 1996 RSWR has received \$71,000 from recycled stamps. Right Sharing's stamp project was begun in 1996 by Brad Hathaway from Mattapoisett Friends Meeting in Massachusetts. Brad was a retired stamp dealer and began to collect and sell stamps to benefit Quaker missions after his retirement. With help from a committee at his meeting, he was able to send thousands of dollars to several Quaker service projects including

Right Sharing of World Resources. Brad was forced to discontinue his service in 2009 due to poor health. Since then, the project has been continued by Earl Walker of Claremont Friends Meeting in California.

### HOW DO I RECYCLE STAMPS TO BENEFIT OTHERS?

All stamps are valuable, although some have greater value, particularly those from foreign countries. The new domestic Forever stamps that are currently being released are especially valuable.

Stamps should be cut from envelopes with 1/8" to 1/4" of paper around the stamp. For foreign mail include the envelope as well because many dealers collect foreign envelopes. Save the envelopes of domestic mail postmarked prior to 1946 too. Do not remove stamps from very old letters, as the envelopes and letters can have considerable value.

In addition to stamps, Earl also accepts baseball cards, coin collections, Box Tops for Education; picture postcards and government postal cards in their entirety; historical paper including photographs, documents, prints, autographs, etc. Greeting cards, birthday cards, Valentines, etc. from the early 1900s are also very valuable.

**Send your stamps and other collectibles to:**

**Earl Walker/Quaker Missions West, 650 Harrison Ave., Claremont, CA 91711**

RIGHT SHARING OF WORLD RESOURCES projects are supported by individuals, monthly meetings and yearly meetings. Contributions are tax-deductible in the USA and may be sent directly or through your meeting or church.

### EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Look for adult and children's educational materials about right sharing on our website:

[www.rswr.org/resources/](http://www.rswr.org/resources/)

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