



Changing Lives...  
Building Futures  
One community at a time

VGIF, creating change by funding grants that empower women and girls in developing countries



*The Virginia Gildersleeve  
International Fund, Inc.*  
**Annual Report 2008**

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## Our focus:

Women and children in developing countries...

## Our mission: their empowerment



*... in the remote  
central plateau of  
Tibet...*

## President's Message

"There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women." Kofi Annan, FORMER UN Secretary-General. VGIF would like to emphatically add, "and girls" to Mr. Annan's statement. The Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund believes that equal access to education and resources are the keys to empowering women and girls in developing countries.

Over 40 years, VGIF has developed the expertise to identify grants that will have an immediate impact with a high probability of sustainability. Due diligence is performed on project requests, and on-site visits and reports ensure that funds arrive where they are needed and are used for their intended purpose.

In 2008, VGIF funded 30 grants for a total of \$144,283 and set aside \$5,000 for the International Federation of University Women (IFUW), a record for grants and US dollars spent. We monitored the execution of 23 grants awarded in 2007; significantly expanded an on-site evaluation program, with visits to 23 projects, including 8 funded in 2008; launched a strategic planning process with a Board retreat; and filed our first quadrennial report to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on our activities at the United Nations as a non-governmental organization (NGO) with consultative status.

The validity of our funding philosophy was confirmed when the students in the Chungba Primary School in the remote central plateau of Tibet swept the final exams placing first in all subjects and taking top honors across Litang County in 2008. In recognition of their achievement, the Litang County Education Bureau announced a special award for the school. The Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Education Bureau offered a special scholarship for the top three Chungba students to attend the Dartsedo Middle School. The Shenpen Fund (now called Machik) established a fully functioning boarding school in the Tibetan village of Chungba for 210 children, aged 7-12, with the unprecedented school population requirement of 50% girls. In 2003, VGIF awarded the Fund its first grant so that they could purchase warm clothing and blankets to combat harsh winter weather as the new school did not have heaters. Local tailors made two sets of clothing in traditional Tibetan style called "chubas" for each of the 245 children at the Chungba School... a thick winter set and a second set in lighter materials. Today, Machik has expanded its activities beyond the school, with a variety of activities including seeding a Tibetan Women's Leadership Program.

I encourage you to examine this exciting and valuable work for yourself. Read about some of the exceptional results your contributions have nourished... in opening doors to education and training, funding effective health services and providing economic opportunities.

Won't you join us as a donor, investing in the hopes and dreams of women and girls in the developing world to make them a reality? We can do more... with your financial support.

**Eileen Shelley Menton, President  
2008-2011**

***"There is no tool for development more effective  
than the empowerment of women."***

***Kofi Annan***

# Great Impact from Small Grants Made in 2008

## Provided health-care related services in under-served rural communities

In **Bamenda, Cameroon**, the incidence of malaria was reduced after the distribution of 700 mosquito nets to 550 homes.

Rural women in the **Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria** benefited from the training provided to 38 traditional birth attendants.

In **Kabalagala, Uganda**, children and their families received medical and dental treatment and health education. As an added benefit, the number of malaria cases was reduced from 30-40 per month to 3-4 per month.

## Improved the lives of women and girls affected by HIV/AIDS, war, and domestic violence

In **Liberia**, women leaders formed an anti-rape network to encourage the enforcement of existing laws and to fight against violence against women and girls in rural areas.

In **Zimbabwe**, widowed women and orphaned girls grew food and participated in income generating projects to help pay for school fees throughout the difficult election and post-election period.

In **Ethiopia**, families with HIV positive children received nutritional supplements and business training. In addition to producing as well as selling injera (local bread) and Ethiopian spice mixes, the families now sell butter, candles, new and second hand clothing trade, and set up small vegetables stalls. [cover photo]

In **Burundi**, 25 women from 3 local tribes, which had been in conflict, near Rumonge city and Karonda village were empowered through a tailoring project.



*"We have been provided with mosquito nets. They have improved the health conditions of our family."  
Sarah Lumoh, mother, Uganda*



*"In Chimanimani, Zimbabwe the little girls who are orphans and are staying alone have really benefited from the training and the income generating projects."  
Village head Muzvizii, Chimanimani, Zimbabwe.*

*"My gratitude to God and AFEBUDE supporters for with the skills from the tailoring centre based in Karonda I am now able to send my children to school and feed them without any obstacle."  
Bernadette, mother, Burundi.*



## Trained women on their legal rights.

The story of a widow in Tanzania who attended training on land ownership rights:

*After the death of her husband, Anna Semlyuka had to be 'inherited' (married) by her brother-in-law to be allowed to remain living in the house where she used to live with her husband and continue farming the family land they had. When she refused, she was beaten and sent back to the village of her parents. Her parents were dead and she had nowhere to live and no farm. With three children still in school, she needed to support them. She brought her case to the paralegal center where it was recorded and followup was planned. However her father-in-law visited the paralegal center with the same case and asked the center service providers for guidance on how he could return the house and farm to Anna Semlyuka who, according to his knowledge, was probably begging in the streets with his grandchildren! Asked as to why he now wanted to help Anna, the old man said ... " I was impressed by what I heard at the market the other day about women's rights. I felt it was very true that women help in development and in the house. We should really stop living in the past. We should start respecting women now... as you say. You are right" As I write here, Anna is back in her former home. She says " .... It is only God's Plan... that women living in such a far away country, can have such a heart as to help black women they have never seen! ... And me of all the people!... I don't know what to say to express my thanks. All I can say is God Bless them because I have nothing to pay them... (tears) "*

*Salome Kang'wezi, Project Director*



In Nigeria, thousands of community leaders, clergy, parents, and children are now aware of abuses covered by the Child Rights Act and know that violations can be reported to family law centers where free legal counsel is available.

In the Mufindi district of Tanzania, thousands of women now know their land ownership rights and have access to paralegals who can assist them.

**Learn more about these projects and  
others like them at  
[www.vgif.org](http://www.vgif.org)**

## Empowered women through economic development

In rural **Peru** local women have their own voice, worked with other stakeholders in the community, increased economic opportunities, and preserved traditional crafts and culture through training in milling and packing of grains and tubers for sale and improved production of indigenous Andean handicrafts and weaving.

In **Sierra Leone**, 50 women and young girls became self-reliant and responsible members of the community through literacy and skill-training in tailoring and cloth-weaving as opposed to the hard life on the streets with no gainful employment possibilities that would have been their future.

In **India**, 25 Dalith women were trained in weaving that provided income-generation through the sale of a variety of products at local markets. A portion of the profit is deposited into the local bank as part of the Thrift and Credit program.

In **Uganda**, 1,200 women from rural farming communities were empowered through literacy and entrepreneurial training. They have increased their roles in household decision-making, enhanced their income generating opportunities, and engaged in collective action for necessary changes in their communities.

## Supported girls' education

In **Rwanda**, secondary school girls received a booklet with valuable career counseling and life skills that enable them to develop academically, personally, and socially.

In **Tanzania**, where the lack of hygiene facilities is a principle reason girls stop attending school, four schools have running water and toilets.

In **Pakistan**, girls who could not afford school fees will have better paying jobs and a brighter future once they have completed their formal education at grade 10.

## VGIF and the Empowerment of Women

**Empowering women to alter gender imbalances,  
obtain and sustain economic opportunities**

*My father abandoned me when I was three months old. I was 11 when my mother died. It was a new experience to me the day I entered Craftshare Vocational Training Centre. I realized that I have found a new life. I'm grateful to God that I can now weave a cloth, make different patterns and design on them. I can also read short sentences and write my name correctly. I'm not alone in this struggle.*

*Kady Bangura, 20 years old,  
Sierra Leone*



*“This school is candle of hope for us. It can bring great change in our life which was not possible without education.”*

*Ms. Tahira, sister of a girl student, Pakistan*



## CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING



## Financial Highlights

In 2008, the Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund supported 30 grants for a total of \$144,283, a record amount. VGIF continued to rely on the Virginia Frese Palmer Administrative Fund to cover its non-grant expenses. The Fund's income comes from individual and group donors world-wide. No governmental, foundation, or corporate grants were received in 2008. The Fund relies on a small staff (Executive Director and a part-time assistant) and its network of volunteers to carry out its work. Through proper stewardship of resources through the year, VGIF's financial position remained strong despite losses in the value of our investments as a result of the recessionary economic climate.

### Revenue

Contributions	112,660
Investment Return	(486,204)
Other	5,981
Total Revenue	(369,794)

### Expenses

Program	201,382
Management	36,437
Fundraising	45,984
Total Expenses	283,803

Net Assets as of 12/31/2008 1,875,373 USD

### Board Designated Fund Balances as of 12/31/2008

Erna Hamburger Fund	76,324
Asian Regional Fund	55,548
Central/South American Regional Fund	17,240
The Leaders Fund	10,640
Virginia Frese Palmer Administrative Fund	1,528,715 USD

Copies of the 2008 independent audit and Form 990 are available upon request.



## **VGIF Board of Directors 2008-2009**

### **Officers**

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Dagmar McGILL, 1st Vice President  
Marion KILSON, 2nd Vice President  
Dana WRIGHT, 3rd Vice President  
Karen McKEE, 4th Vice President  
Judith WHITELOCK, Secretary  
Margery SULLIVAN, Treasurer

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### **Executive Director**

Fay KITTELSON



# *VGIF Projects Funded in 2008*

## **AZERBAIJAN**

Digital Development

## **BURUNDI**

Burundian's Women for Development  
Association

## **CAMEROON**

Bongeh Women Common Initiative Group  
Ntankah Village Women Common  
Initiative Group

## **ETHIOPIA**

African Services Committee (ASC)

## **GHANA**

Divine Favor Agency (DFA)  
Association for Women Empowerment (AFWE)

## **INDIA**

Rural People's Welfare Organisation (RPWO)  
Good Hopes Educational Committee

## **KENYA**

Bogiakumu Village Women Group (BVWG)  
Kenya Association for Empowerment of  
Disabled People (KADEP)

## **LIBERIA**

Volunteers to Support International Efforts  
in Developing Africa (VOSIED)

## **MALAWI**

Tutulane AIDS Organization

## **NICARAGUA**

Centro Cultural Batahola Norte

## **NIGERIA**

Silverline Development Initiatives  
International Federation of Women Lawyers -  
Anambra State Chapter

## **PAKISTAN**

Social Transformation and Educational  
Prosperity (STEP)

## **PERU**

Union de Femeninas

## **RWANDA**

Charity Group Association

## **SERBIA**

Anti-Drugs Association (ADA)

## **SIERRA LEONE**

Child Rescue and Welfare Organization  
Craftshare Vocational Training Centre (CVTC)

## **SOUTH AFRICA**

Give a Hand and Hope AIDS Project

## **SUDAN**

Ofiriha Community Development Association  
(OCDA)

## **TANZANIA**

Amani Group for Development  
Mufindi District Women's Forum

## **UGANDA**

Miroi Growers Cooperative Society  
The International HUG Foundation  
Uganda Association of University Women  
(UAUW)

## **ZIMBABWE**

Family-in-Need Trust