

# Leading the Way



An International Fund  
for Women and Girls

2016 and 2017 Annual Reports



## Letter from the President:

These last two years with VGIF have been full of change for the organization, but our commitment to women and girls working to better their communities has never wavered.

To understand where VGIF's members and supporters get their passion for grassroots development and women's empowerment, you need look no further than these pages. This Annual Report provides so much energy and inspiration in just a few of the stories from our grantees. These women ARE changing lives. I am honored to have played a part in supporting their work and hope you too encounter that incredible spirit in your experiences with VGIF.

Transitions generally involve some introspective work - work the leadership of VGIF has not shied away from. As part of the 2016 - 2018 Strategic Plan, we took some time to look at our structure as a Board and committed to changes that will ensure our organization's bright future. We will continue to examine central governance components such as our size, our financial structure, and our governing documents so that we can develop resources and establish stability as a grant-making organization for years to come.

As we approach our 50th anniversary in 2019, we are not only looking eagerly toward our future but appreciatively at our past. VGIF is committed to honoring the dedicated women who worked hard to make the organization what it is today. We are excited to commemorate their legacies through celebrations and naming opportunities, like with our Erna Hamberger Society of donors.

Since this is my final year as president, I want to take this opportunity to thank the many people involved with VGIF - Board members, committee members, donors, staff (past and present), Carrie Callagher and Emily Forhman - for working so diligently for VGIF and for providing me with friendship and support throughout my tenure. It has been an amazing experience for me. With your continued interest in and support of VGIF, I know we will continue to help others make a better world.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeri Rhodes".

**Vision**

**VGIF envisions a world where gender equality prevails & where women and girls can access or create opportunities for themselves.**



## Mission

**VGIF provides grants globally to fund locally generated projects that advance the rights of women & girls.**

### Letter from the Executive Director:

If there was still a doubt in anyone's mind, 2016 and 2017 made it undeniably clear that the future is female. With more women being elected, educated and heard than ever before, we saw the incredible power that comes from speaking up and declaring that it is time for real change.

VGIF is no exception. When I was hired as Executive Director in November 2016, I saw an organization with an amazing vision: a world where women and girls are able to take the lead in creating the change they want to see in their own lives and within their own communities.

In the past two years, VGIF has worked to make important progress that will allow us to fund more projects and create greater impact. The VGIF Board, staff and community implemented structures allowing us to increase productivity and shorten our grants process timeline. We welcomed a new team of staff members, installed a new grants management software, and readied the organization to begin a new strategic planning process in April 2018.

All the while, I've been continually inspired by our grantees' stories of achievement. In 2016 and 2017, the women we funded installed water systems in drought-ridden areas, provided vital medicine and examinations to their pregnant neighbors, encouraged girls to pursue careers in science, and taught single and unemployed moms to sew.

Though these changes are happening in communities that aren't often on the world stage, VGIF's supporters and the women and girls leading our projects represent a universal truth: when our rights are at risk, women help other women and deserve to be part of the solution.

As we approach a new year, VGIF will continue working to become the most effective organization we can be by asking our grantees, our Board members, and our community: How can we do more? With the organization's nearly 50 years of expertise in the underfunded landscape of grassroots development, I feel confident in VGIF's ability to become a leader in the field of women's empowerment.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eng Lee', written over a white background.



# Why Small Grants?

The benefits of grassroots funding - or the funding of people within the communities directly affected by a problem - are numerous and well documented:

## 1. Better Outcomes:

When people designing and leading a project are intimately familiar with the social structures at work, their plan will be better tailored and more effective.

## 2. Sustainability:

Grassroots organizers have personal and permanent connections to the communities they represent, so they are more motivated to commit to outcomes that last.

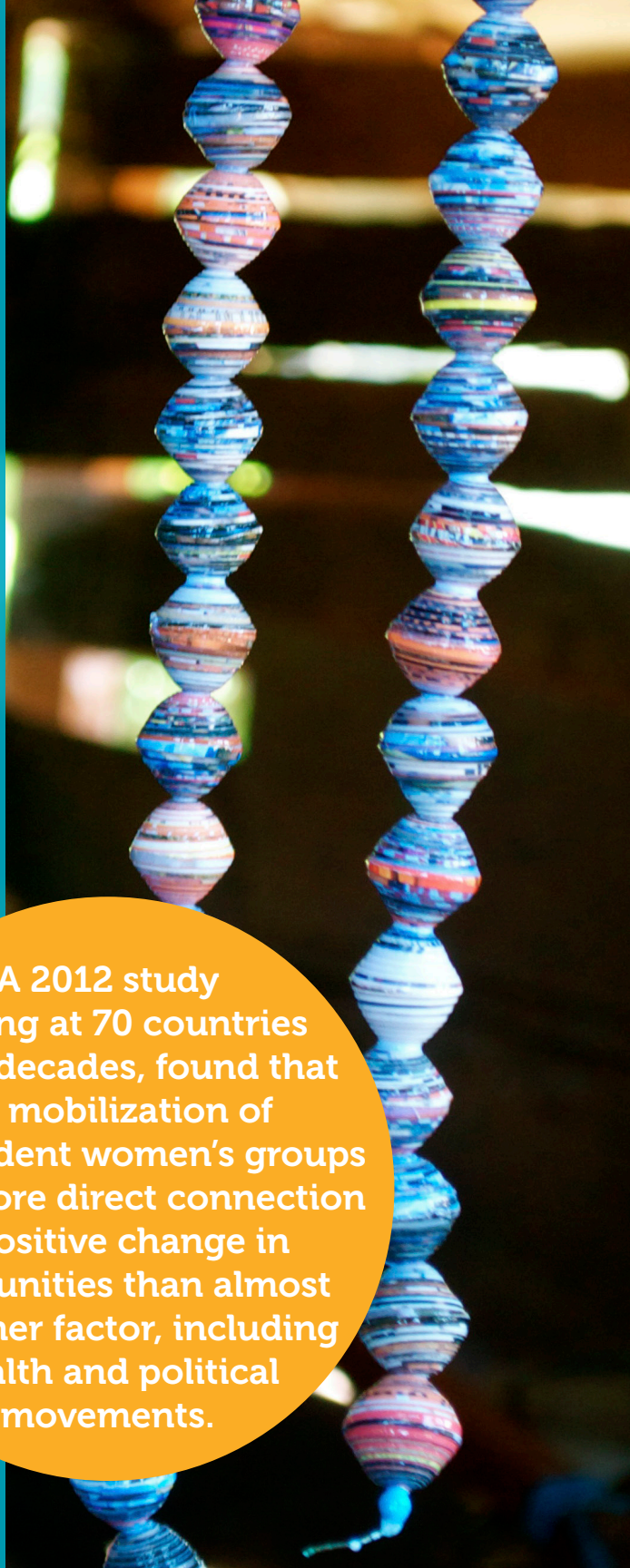
## 3. Lower Costs:

Giving control to grassroots organizations immediately eliminates the high costs of travel, accommodations, etc. so often employed by larger NGOs.

## 4. Self-Sufficient Communities:

With grassroots grants, community members benefit from the process as well as the outcomes. Project leaders learn new skills, identify larger problems at work in their neighborhoods, and create change that they choose and they believe in.

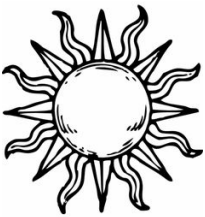
**A 2012 study looking at 70 countries over 4 decades, found that the mobilization of independent women's groups had a more direct connection to positive change in communities than almost any other factor, including wealth and political movements.**





# SMALL GRANTS LOCAL ACTION BETTER LIVES

With small grants, the women VGIF supports create significant impact in their communities. In just one year, some of our most recent grantees were able to...



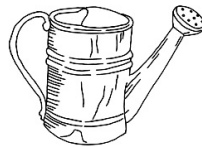
**Give 175 solar cookers** to women at risk of rape when collecting firewood in Somalia.



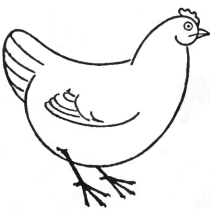
**Help 15 women earn elected positions in their community** - tripling the number of women in leadership roles in Mkukula, Malawi.



**Screen 210 pregnant women for fistulas,** uterine problems, STI's and pelvic infection in India.



**Give 1,000 bundles of sweet potato vines and 5 irrigation pumps** to help 242 vulnerable women and girls make a living in Tanzania.



**Provide 20 pigs and 2,000 chickens** to 40 women in Uganda - along with training on how to farm and raise livestock to best generate income.



**Administer computer and graphic design training courses to 15 women with severe spinal cord injuries** in Kenya. The women secured jobs in social media, branding and writing.



**Train 98 single mothers in dressmaking,** empowering them to leave jobs as sex workers in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



**Provide legal aid and psychological support** to 55 Syrian refugees who were victims of rape in Turkey.



In the grant cycles ending in 2016 and 2017, VGIF invested

**\$801,759**

...to directly affect the lives of more than...

**26,500**

women and girls through...

**81**

one-year projects and...

**22**

multi-year projects in...

**30**

countries.



# Working for HUMAN RIGHTS

VGIF Project #1405

## Rural Women's Empowerment & Development Organization

Kenya

*\$22,500 grant, over three years*

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The Rural Women's Empowerment & Development Organization (RUWEDO) initially formed with the mission of teaching widows in rural Kakamega how to farm more sustainably.

But as project organizers spoke with participants, they learned of a more troubling threat to their community: **rampant sexual violence against female students**, which the under-funded schools were unable to stop.

The VGIF-funded project's leaders sprang into action - training 30 paralegals to educate girls on their legal rights and defend survivors of gender-based violence in court.

These paralegals have since taken on many critical cases. Their legal victory representing a 15-year-old girl who had been raped and impregnated by a neighbor sent a clear signal to the community that assault would no longer be tolerated.

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**30 paralegals** trained to represent child survivors of violence and sexual assault. ✓

**2,000 girls** educated on women's health and how to protect themselves from gender-based violence. ✓

**60 single moms** provided with materials and training to plant kitchen gardens. ✓



“ These girls have no one to protect them.

The work is hard, But we can't stop.”

- RUWEDO Paralegal



## Forum for Africa Women Educationalists (FAWEZI)

Zimbabwe

*\$22,500 grant, over three years*

Only 19% of female students in Zimbabwe pursue degrees in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

So when hundreds of girls in the Tafara district began joining VGIF-sponsored science clubs, attending a new science camp and competing in regional STEM competitions, their male peers told them **“a girl will never go anywhere with these things.”**

Only one year into their VGIF funding, FAWEZI participants have already proved them wrong.

Hundreds of girls have joined science clubs across the district. One of them - a bright student named Tatiana - invented a low-carbon cooking stove that won competitions at the district, local and national levels.

**“ The best part is how science can make you see the world in a different way.”**

**- Tatiana,**

A student whose participation in FAWEZI's science club led to her representing Zimbabwe at the UN Climate Conference in Paris

**300 girls** attended a new science camp. It was such a success that... ✓

**4 additional schools** have already signed up to attend camp next year. ✓

**6 schools** developed STEM clubs and action plans to encourage girls to pursue math and science. ✓



**Working for an EDUCATION**



## VGIF Project #1504

### El Pozo de Vida

Mexico

*\$22,500 grant, over three years*

## Working for INDEPENDENCE

When Lorena received death threats from the notorious MS13 gang, she and her husband were forced to flee El Salvador - leaving jobs, friends and two young children behind.

When they arrived in Mexico, the couple willingly turned themselves in to immigration, where they were **confronted by an inefficient processing system, vague instructions, and little insight as to how or when they would be able to reunite with their family.**

The VGIF-funded "Dream" program was there to help, providing clinics, therapy and one-on-one guidance to help detained female migrants navigate the complicated and intimidating process of seeking safety in a new country. Dream volunteers explained all of Lorena's options to her - ensuring that her children will be brought to safety sooner.

### **2,777 detained immigrants**

attended sexual violence prevention sessions, cultural adaptation workshops, and therapeutic counseling as they arrived in the detention centers or prepared for deportation. ✓

### **57 victims of human trafficking**

identified by Dream volunteers, informed of their rights and connected to resources for seeking asylum and aid. ✓

**215 army officers** trained to identify and protect victims of human trafficking. ✓

“As immigrants, we think we don't have any rights - that we can't demand anything.

But VGIF gave us tools to act. ”

- Lorena,

Detained Immigrant who was helped to reunite with her children.



# Working for HEALTH & WELLNESS

VGIF Project #20315

## Public Health Ambassadors Uganda (PHAU)

Uganda

*\$7,500 grant, over one year*

Grace used to **miss a week of school each month because she couldn't afford sanitary pads** and was afraid her classmates would make fun of her if she bled through her clothes.

But when VGIF sponsored PHAU's project to provide washing facilities, pads and health classes for girls in five Ugandan schools, Grace's attendance dramatically improved.

Grace is now the president of her school's PHAU club. When her classmates need help, they can turn to her.

**300 girls** received reusable pads that they otherwise couldn't afford. ✓

**1,497 girls** attended health classes to learn how to best take care of their bodies. ✓

**10 teachers** received training to support girls and combat stigma surrounding menstruation. ✓

**5,000-liter water harvesting tank** installed at a school that previously had little access to water. ✓

“ I learned to respect myself, take care of my body, and support other girls younger than myself.

We shouldn't have to miss school because of the way our bodies work. ”

- Grace,

PHAU health club President







## VGIF In The Field

In September 2017, Program Director Jenna Wallace embarked on a site visit trip to 10 project locations across Kenya and Uganda.

Site visits enable VGIF to create stronger relationships with our grantee partners while learning about the local context where projects are taking place, gathering feedback on our grant-making, and identifying new partnerships.

**“Spending time with the women who are designing and implementing these projects, it is so clear that VGIF’s commitment to empowering women leaders is well-founded.”**

**These are dedicated and determined women who will ensure that their communities are more equal and safe for women and girls.”**

**- Jenna Wallace**

VGIF Program  
Director



# 2016 and 2017 Financial Reports

Contributions & Grants to VGIF rose

# 43%

from 2016 to 2017.

## Revenue and Support

	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017*</b>
Contributions and Grants.....	\$123,367	\$176,661
Special Events, net of expenses .....	\$2,031	\$197,752
Dividends and Interest.....	\$569,586	\$529,943
Realized Gain (Loss)		
- sale of investments.....	\$1,075,161	(\$484,680)
Foreign Taxes.....	(\$5,129)	(\$9,597)
Investment Management Fees.....	(\$83,498)	(\$89,721)
<b>Total Revenue &amp; Support.....</b>	<b>\$1,681,518</b>	<b>\$320,358</b>

## Expenses

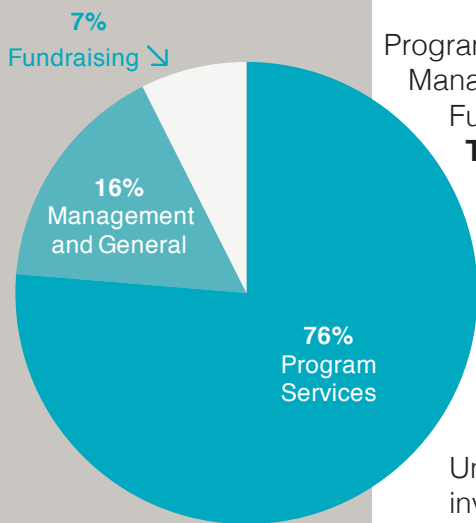
	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017*</b>
Program Services.....	\$996,439	\$780,552
Management and General.....	\$238,072	\$166,355
Fundraising.....	\$106,169	\$75,989
<b>Total Expenses.....</b>	<b>\$1,340,680</b>	<b>\$1,022,896</b>

## Change in Net Assets

Before unrealized gain on investments.....	\$340,838	(\$702,538)
Unrealized gain on investments.....	\$169,358	\$2,006,057
Change in Net Assets.....	\$510,196	\$1,303,519

## NET ASSETS

Beginning of year.....	\$16,777,225	\$17,287,431
End of year.....	\$17,287,421	\$18,590,940



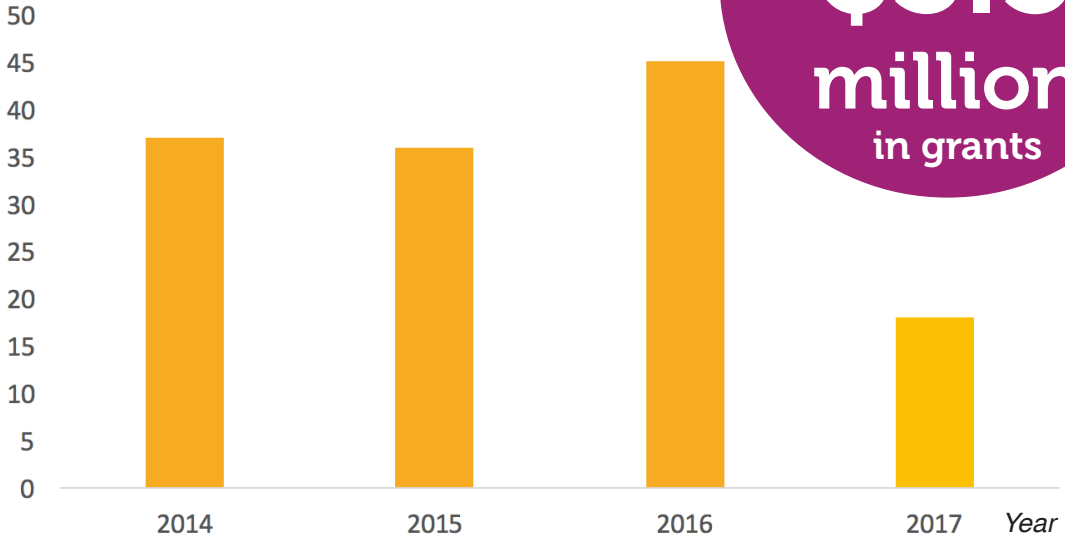
## 2017 Expenses

\* The 2017 numbers are unaudited.



## Single-Year Grants

Number of  
Single-Year  
Grants



To date, VGIF  
has disbursed  
**\$3.5**  
million  
in grants

## Multi-Year Grants

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
NEW	2	2	2	6	6	8	1
TOTAL	2	4	6	10	14	20	15

### Note from the President:

2016 and 2017 were years of transition for VGIF – moving staff leadership from a part-time Interim Director to a full-time Executive Director.

One of the first steps our new Executive Director undertook was a full review of VGIF's financial situation. She proposed, and the Board agreed, that a smaller number of grants would be awarded in 2017 while financial statements and a new grant making software were updated and upgraded.

In 2018, VGIF will return its one-year grant making budget to previous levels and has budgeted to award \$285,000 to grantees.

## Elizabeth S. May Society

Gifts of \$10,000 or more  
in a year

Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP  
Debevoise & Plimpton LLP  
Kramer Levin Naftalis &  
Frankel LLP  
Latham & Watkins LLP  
Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP  
Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP

Paul Hastings LLP  
Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP  
WilmerHale  
Moore & Van Allen  
Linda Hiebert Sekiguchi  
Morrison & Foerster LLP

## Virginia Cocheron Gildersleeve Society

Gifts of \$5,000 or more

Mary McGovern Eileen Menton Dagmar McGill Virginia Maynard  
Abby Meiselman Diane Trombetta Mayer Brown LLP  
Louise McLeod Margery Sullivan Shireen Lee

## Erna Hamburger Society

Gifts of \$2,500 or more

Carolyn Donovan Christine Schmitz Chloe Baker Barbara Carey

## Ambassador Level

Gifts of \$1,000 or more

Nancy Vang &	Lisa Fleming	Jacqueline Shahzadi
Fay Kittleson	Elizabeth Parker	Joyce Prudden
Susannah Dhamdhere	Jewell Hanna	Karen Cullen
Alice Bartelt	Helen Dunsmore	Leslie Wright
Andrea Torrico	Raime Leebby Muhle	Lynn Hapchuk
Gerlinde Sarkar	Maureen Friar	Maggie Ford
James P. McLoughlin, Jr.	Jane Schukoske	Margaret George
Jeri Rhodes	Camille Macdonald-Polski	Marie W. Powers
Karen McKee	Carolyn Cowgill	Myrna Brown
Kathleen Magill	Edward P. O'Keefe	Sema Faigen
Edith Allison		

## Champion Level

Gifts of \$500 or more

Nancy Scheer	Valerie Dell	Dr. Fay C. Weber
John McInerney	Kelli Monahan	Ella & Howard Iams
Janet Matwiyoff	Florine Swanson	Janet Crampton
Claire Stein	Anita Thomas	Lawrence Gubler
Janet Rochester	Babette Bierman	Leslianne Braunstein
Julie Pennington	Claudia Gray	Mary Sherman
NY County Surrogates Court	Dana Wright	Michaela Walsh
Shruti Kashikar	Dorothy Krug	Yvonne Condell



**Virginia Cocheron  
Gildersleeve  
Society**

Gifts of \$5,000 or more

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Mary McGovern	Dagmar McGill	Florine Swanson
Eileen Menton	Donna Connor	Virginia Maynard

**Erna Hamburger  
Society**

Gifts of \$2,500 or more

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Diane Trombetta	Margery Sullivan
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**Ambassador Level**

Gifts of \$1,000 or more

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Jeri Rhodes	Susannah Dhamdhere	Carolyn Cowgill
Elizabeth Parker	Christine Schmitz	Gerlinde Sarkar
Edith Allison	Claire Stein	Jacqueline Shahzadi
Alice Bartelt	Helen Dunsmore	Kathleen Magill
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**Champion Level**

Gifts of \$500 or more

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Lynn Hapchuk	Kelli Monahan	Hester Brooks
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Andrea Torrico	Claudia Gray	Mary Sherman
Julie Pennington	Dana Wright	Michaela Walsh
Mary Eleanor Wall	Ella & Howard Iams	Yvonne Condell

# 2016 & 2017 Donors

Gifts of \$500 and below\*

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AAUW Baltimore, The College Club  
AAUW San Jose  
AAUW Birmingham (MI)  
AAUW Casas Adobes Tucson\*  
AAUW Citrus Heights, American River\*  
AAUW Fort Myers / Lee County\*  
AAUW Kalispell  
AAUW La Palma-Cerritos\*  
AAUW Louisiana  
AAUW San Ramon  
AAUW Tehachapi Mountain  
AAUW Toledo  
AAUW Virginia  
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