

# **F**IRST STEP INITIATIVE

*S* MALL GIFTS. *B*IG CHANGES.

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## Second Quarter Newsletter 2017

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### Newly Funded

#### Embroidery Project

Five women, who support 25 dependents, operate a dress shop in the Kenya neighborhood of Lubumbashi. We approved their request for funds to purchase two embroidery machines. They have a successful business but have been renting an embroidery machine at a high price. With the addition of their own machines, in addition to sharply reducing their embroidery costs, they will be able to expand their inventory of greater-value, embroidered goods and ready-to-wear items.



#### Hair Salon Project

This collective of three women support 15 dependents. They wish to “make a beautiful hair salon a great place” and know that “to make beautiful work, we must have a place of rental.” They have been working outdoors and would like to acquire better equipment and rental space. The FSI grant will help make this happen.



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### Project Updates

#### Chicken Coop Project

FSI staff recently visited amerry-go-round that received funding to build a better chicken coop and add to their inventory. The project is moving along very well. The women reported that political insecurity delayed construction of the chicken coop. In the interim they put the increased capital to work and purchased chicks that have already gone to market.



They now have begun the construction work, as shown in the photo. Since the FSI grant, they have been to market 3 times with chickens. At the time of the FSI visit, they had 150

chicks in addition to 140 nearly market ready chickens. Once the chicken coop construction is complete, they will increase the number of chicks. Great success! These Mamans feel much encouraged and thank FSI for the support.

## Carrot Project

There are five women working together in this collective. Pictured is FSI staffer Bea conducting a project review with one of the five women. In the six months since receiving FSI funding for working capital, they have made significant progress. Their monthly profit has gone from \$200 to \$1100. This allows noticeable improvement in their families' living standards. Way to go!



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## Sewing Trade School

Congratulations, graduates! The second class of students just completed their course. Pictured on the right are the graduates, Rachel, Betty, Rachel, Marvel and Marie. These students have mastered the basic skills needed to sew products for resale. Each one received an FSI grant of basic supplies and a sewing machine and will have periodic check-ins with their instructor, Mireille, as she begins this new endeavor.



The good work being done at our partner Kimbilio's **sewing workshop** was recognized by the British magazine, *Sew Now*. [The article](#) focuses on Kimbilio's work with children and mentions our school for adult women. Take a look and pay attention to the variety of skills being taught.

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## High School Students Step Up

Students from Minnetonka High School's VANTAGE program worked with First Step Initiative during the spring semester to develop a promotional plan for FSI, with an emphasis on social media. In the VANTAGE program, students work with a project team to solve real-world problems and learn about the challenges of project-driven work. Four 11th grade students from VANTAGE's Global business specialty created a roadmap for FSI to follow to increase our presence and following on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter with a view to expanding our donor base. They also brought forward a proposed new FSI logo, a mock-up of a new website, and a multitude of ideas on community outreach. Thank you and well done, VANTAGE!

We're also delighted that we have a summer intern from VANTAGE. He is leading the charge on implementing his peer group's recommendations. For those of you who don't follow us yet on social media, start now and you'll see us evolve first hand:



[Neema Namadamu](#) is an advocate for disability rights, women's rights and peace. She contracted polio as a two-year-old and despite being physically disabled as a result, she refused to be limited. She insisted on attending school and ultimately became the first disabled DR Congo woman to graduate college and the second woman from her tribe to graduate from Congo's national university.



Neema is a native of eastern Congo, an area that has seen and continues to experience persistent guerilla warfare and violence. When her 25-year-old daughter was severely beaten by government soldiers in 2012, Neema redoubled her peace initiatives. In response, she founded the Maman Shujaa Media Center, a powerful women-led initiative that uses digital media to amplify the voices of women demanding peace in eastern Congo.

Several FSI board members were able to meet with Neema during her recent trip to the USA. She was in the States to meet with sponsors and raise awareness. During our conversation we learned about a recent initiative she's launched – preparing packets of feminine hygiene products. Young girls stay home from school for lack of these items. This initiative not only provides reusable pads to the girls, it provides employment to women in a workshop where the packets are prepared. Neema pointed out that education is an important factor in delaying the age of marriage for these girls.

*Pictured in photo: board members Pat Gaarder and Scott Rehovsky; guest Estelle Brouwer; Neema Namadamu and FSI Chair Ellen Wolaner.*

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