

DINING FOR WOMEN

Interim Progress Report

LOTUS OUTREACH

Counseling and Reintegration

Grantee Name:

Lotus Outreach

Progress Report Content: May–October 2014

1. Please provide the following information

- a. Organization Name: Lotus Outreach
- b. Program Title: Counseling and Reintegration (2nd year of a 3 year grant program)
- c. Grant Amount: \$15,000.00
- d. Contact Person: Thomas Waltcher
- e. Address: PO Box 60351, Sacramento, CA 95860

2. Recap briefly what outcomes the program was designed to achieve:

This is the first biannual report of the 2nd year of a three-year program established to give shelter-based counseling and economic empowerment for survivors of sexual abuse, domestic violence, and human trafficking in Banteay Meanchey, Cambodia. These are the outcomes the program was designed to achieve:

- (1) Provide up to 100 survivors of Violence Against Women (VAW) with individual and group trauma therapy, allowing them to overcome the ravages of abuse and regain the self-worth and self-confidence needed to successfully rejoin society and lead safe, healthy and happy lives.
- (2) Award small business grants to approximately 10 reintegrated survivors, allowing them to utilize the vocational skills acquired while in residence.
- (3) Pair survivors with a qualified social worker that will assist them in planning their lives beyond the shelter, including: finding a new home, starting a small business, managing money and enrolling their children in school.
- (4) Social workers support and accompany survivors in reintegrating with their families and communities and provide follow-up support.
- (5) Maintain and expand local, external women's support groups for reintegrated survivors and other vulnerable women and girls in the community so they can share their challenges, frustrations, problems and concerns, giving them a continued emotional support-base and source of encouragement once they leave the shelter.

3. Has funding changed for this program? For example, have you received unexpected funding from another source?

The funding for this program has not changed. Dining for Women remains our primary supporter for this program. We also receive funds from the Global Giving Foundation, an online charity fundraiser, but the annual amount is quite small in comparison.

4. Is your organization or program situation different than presented in the approved proposal? For example, new executive director, significant program staffing changes or NGO affiliation, loss of large funding, or other significant changes?

Lotus Outreach is currently undergoing several internal staffing changes. For one, in order to pursue other issues of great importance to her, Elise De Grande, our previous Executive Director, resigned from her position at Lotus Outreach in September 2014. In her stead, Thomas Waltcher has taken on the role of Interim Director. Likewise, our Grants Manager, Wesley Samms, has decided to pursue a different line of work. Although these changes are significant and worth mentioning, the LO staff that have direct impact on the ground in Cambodia and deal with the specific implementation of this program are completely committed. Both our Director of Field Operations for over 17 years, Glenn Fawcett, and Raskmey Var, our Country Representative in Cambodia, are fully immersed and have been at the forefront of monitoring and implementing this program.

5. What challenges are you facing as you move forward with this project? How are you approaching these challenges?

There have been challenges in two related areas of the post-counseling or reintegration portion of the program. We first faced the challenge of getting our women's economic empowerment groups off the ground. Chicken farming was the main source of income we promoted amongst our participants. Unfortunately, there were significant and unavoidable illnesses amongst our groups' chickens that caused significant setbacks this past reporting period. In Samroang village, a huge portion of chickens died leaving only 20 alive. Likewise, in Pongro village only 15 chickens remained alive after massive illness spread.

We approached this challenge by continuing our assistance and technical advice to mentor these groups. The outcome, even given these challenges, was that these groups remained very committed to continuing their joint businesses ventures. As a result, the chicken stocks have recovered significantly. Over the past quarter the Samroang group was able to sell chickens 4 times for a total of 120 USD profit.

The second challenge was the implementation of agriculture training and the awarding of grants, which occur in tandem with each other. Training is completed, along with a grant that relates to the agriculture training. Although we had allocated 10 grants for an average of \$250, there ultimately was no demand for agriculture training to prepare clients for a small business grant for chicken or pig raising up till this point. However, during the period

three other small business grants have been allocated. See question 7 below for further grant details.

The main reason for not implementing new agricultural training and follow up business grants, is that the girls in our shelter were either too young, did not stay in the shelter long enough to receive the training, had no interest in establishing agricultural based businesses or did not want or could not under the circumstances, begin any kind of agro-business with a village based group of like minded women.

6. Have you revised your original objectives since the project began? If so, why? What are your new objectives?

There have been no revisions to our original objectives since the project began.

7. What progress have you made toward achieving your objectives? Please address each stated objective.

(1) Provide up to 100 survivors of VAW with individual and group trauma therapy:

Up till this midyear point, 84 survivors have been treated in individual and group trauma therapy sessions. Two counselors provided a total of 157 sessions of individual counseling to these survivors. These 84 participants ranged from three groups of violence— domestic violence, sexual abuse and human trafficking. The break down is as follows: 30 of these survivors were domestic violence cases, 16 rape victims and 38 were involved in human trafficking.

(2) Award small business grants to approximately 10 reintegrated survivors:

As mentioned in question 5 above, during the period three small business grants have been allocated. One was allocated to a relative of a two-year-old victim of sexual abuse to establish a grocery business and one to a victim of domestic violence, again to set up a grocery business, which now generates approximately 75 USD per day! The third grant that has been allocated for a victim of rape, however, the grant is still at its application stage so it is still undecided how exactly the funds will be used.

Moreover, two further economic empowerment groups have been established this past October, so we hope these groups will eventually facilitate some of their members to acquire the remaining 7 grants to meet our objective by the end of second grant year.

While there have been challenges to this aspect of the program, reintegrated survivors have also been consulted on vocational skills and job assistance. Some decided to attend sewing class in our shelter while others expressed interest in a hairdressing course outside of the shelter. The project team also continued to provide support to previously established income generating startups and conducted 6 follow-up visits to three women's economic empowerment groups. Furthermore, the agriculture trainer conducted one additional visit

to a previously established group as well. The purpose of the visit was to see the general situation of business, to check on technique in feeding the chickens and how to treat chickens when getting sick and to check on bookkeeping.

(3) Pair survivors with a qualified social worker that will assist them in planning their lives beyond the shelter:

Up till this midyear point, 43 survivors have been paired with a social worker and given social services to prepare a reintegration life plan. This plan readies the client for reintegration, makes a social assessment at the point of reintegration to ensure no further chances of abuse or stigmatization beyond the shelter. In addition, the reintegration team gave \$50 to each survivor to buy food commodities, kitchen materials and other necessary items.

(4) Social workers help support and accompany survivors during reintegration:

These 43 survivors have also been interviewed in follow-up visits during reintegration. Social workers accompanied the survivors back to their homes and also have begun their follow-up reintegration program that lasts for one year while program social workers conduct regular visits to ensure the survivor is reintegrating fully back into their families and wider communities. After this period, the project social worker will help give a government social welfare department officer the case, which this officer will continue to observe and follow-up even beyond the project's reintegration period of 12 months.

In addition, it can be noted that the reintegration team attended 10 monthly meetings of district based multi-sector networks established by Cambodia Women's Crisis Center (CWCC), our local partner. These meetings comprised of police, CCWC staff, commune council members, health personnel, community resource persons, women's affairs and social affairs and were held in the Ochrov, Malai, Sereysophoan and Mongkul Borei districts. The reintegration team took the opportunity at these meetings to learn about the current situation of women and girls in the reported communities, exchange information on case referrals, and follow-up and tighten cooperation for further joint interventions.

(5) Maintain and expand local, external women's support groups:

There were two new women's self-help groups established during this reporting period. In addition, the reintegration team in cooperation with the microfinance team conducted follow-up visits to see the progress of the existing women's economic empowerment groups and self-help groups from the first year of the program. In total the project team maintained follow-up visits and ensured monthly meetings took place for 10 existing plus the two new women's groups that encompassed a total of 78 members.

8. Do you anticipate any difficulties in completing your project in the timeframe outlined in your proposal?

It is possible that the two new women's support groups established in October 2014 may take more time than expected to reach the next phase of becoming saving groups or full economic empowerment groups, as the members of each group need time to coalesce and build trust in each other. Once this is accomplished they will go through the process of savings funds to be able to lend out micro-loans to members. After they have saved some funds and promoted themselves, they can apply for a small business grant. As such, it would be ideal to still award small business grants as needed and appropriate to members in those groups beyond the current DFW grant period.

9. Any message you would like us to convey to our membership and donors about the impact our grant is having on those being served and/or your organization and its mission.

Thank you so much for your support of our program Counseling and Reintegration located in Cambodia. Lotus Outreach, like Dining For Women, seeks to empower girls and women who have been falsely deemed inferior by their communities and given less opportunity to succeed. Our Counseling and Reintegration program is crucial to empowering women and girls who have been victimized by such atrocities as human trafficking, sexual assault and domestic violence. Through our holistic approach and your support, we have been able to counsel almost 100 women and girls this year alone and are diligently working to help reintegrate them back into their lives. Sharing our mission with Dining For Women, we at Lotus Outreach are continually thrilled with our longstanding, impactful partnership with Dining For Women! Thank you!