Microfinance/Women’s Empowerment in Sierra Leone: Civic Entrepreneurship, Advocacy and the Power of Partnerships

Sara Anne Hook and Betty Tonsing
Right Sharing of World Resources (RSWR)
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Abstract

• This poster will highlight microfinance/women’s empowerment projects in Sierra Leone, administered by Right Sharing of World Resources (RSWR) and funded by the Rotary Club of Indianapolis.

• This example of civic entrepreneurship will demonstrate how providing women with the opportunity to start their own small companies contributes to:
  • building a support system and sense of community
  • addresses the need for social, economic and political stability in a country recovering from civil war and devastating disease.

• The poster will feature the results of efforts to redesign the RSWR website and develop a social media marketing strategy.
Microfinance/Women’s Empowerment

• A passion of mine is microfinance/women’s empowerment, inspired by the work of Muhammad Yunus and because of my experiences teaching an entrepreneurship course here at SoIC every year since 2003.

• Concept of civic entrepreneurship/social entrepreneurship.

• I provided scholarships for five Service Learning Assistants for the project in Mexico, funded by the IUPUI Center for Service and Learning.

• We created a website for the project in Mexico – in both Spanish and English.

• Then I connected with Betty Tonsing through the Rotary Club of Indianapolis and her affiliation with Right Sharing of World Resources (RSWR) and this resulted in projects in Sierra Leone.
Current Projects: Sierra Leone, 2015--

- Partners are Rotary Club of Indianapolis, Rotary Club of Freetown (Sierra Leone) and Right Sharing of World Resources (international microfinance organization).
- First the civil war, then the Ebola outbreak, means that people in Sierra Leone have really been struggling – and yet life must go on.
- Small loans for women to start their own small companies.
  - Includes training in small business management, money management and empowerment.
  - The women’s group there is responsible for providing approximately 10% of the money for each project.
- Each project is approximately $5,000.
- Also total redesign of Right Sharing of World Resources website (by graduate student Shilpa Pachhapurkar) and advice on a social media marketing strategy (by graduate student Cori Faklaris).
Right Sharing of World Resources (RSWR)

- Founded in 1967 as part of the Fourth World Conference of Friends of the Religious Society of Friends.
- Became its own 503(c) entity in 1999.
- Has reached over 12,000 women and their families.
- Headquarters in Richmond, Indiana.
- Works in Sierra Leone, Kenya and south India.
- See https://www.rswr.org/
Where is Sierra Leone?

Ebola outbreak
Scenes from Graced Team Project

Bonthe District, Southern Province

30 poor rural women farmers aged 25-40

Photographs taken by Jackie Stillwell, General Secretary, RSWR
The local school

Extracting palm oil -- this is the business the women who planted cassava had to take up in order to repay their loans.
Preparing a meal

Typical house
Village houses

Washing clothes
Paying back their loans
RSWR Projects
Current Project: Mayogba Rural Women Farmer’s Association

Moyamba District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IGP</th>
<th># of women</th>
<th>Loan per woman</th>
<th>Monthly income after expense</th>
<th>Repayment plus interest</th>
<th>Net monthly income</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cassava</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>SLL.500,000 ($123)</td>
<td>SLL.325,000 ($80)</td>
<td>SLL.85,000 ($21)</td>
<td>SLL.240,000 ($59)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>SLL.600,000 ($147)</td>
<td>SLL.385,000 ($94)</td>
<td>SLL.102,000 ($25)</td>
<td>SLL.283,000 ($69)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Groundnuts</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>SLL.500,000 ($123)</td>
<td>SLL.425,000 ($104)</td>
<td>SLL.85,000 ($21)</td>
<td>SLL.340,000 ($83)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>SLL.500,000 ($123)</td>
<td>SLL.485,000 ($119)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>SLL.500,000 ($123)</td>
<td>SLL.314,000 ($77)</td>
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<td>SLL.229,000 ($56)</td>
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<td>Vegetables</td>
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<td>SLL.454,000 ($111)</td>
<td>SLL.425,000 ($104)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goats</td>
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<td>SLL.500,000 ($123)</td>
<td>SLL.360,000 ($88)</td>
<td>SLL.85,000 ($21)</td>
<td>SLL.275,000 ($67)</td>
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</table>
Redesigning the RSWR Website

• Review of 70+ websites of NGOs/Non-Profit Organizations
• UX Analysis
• Information Architecture
• Rapid Prototyping
• Wireframes
• Enhanced Wireframes
• Design Decisions
Redesigning the RSWR Website
Favorite Quotes

• “Not all of us can do great things. But we can all do small things with great love.” ~ Mother Teresa

• “Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has.” ~ Margaret Mead

• “Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime.” ~ Chinese Proverb

• Please contact us if you have questions: Sara Anne Hook, sahook@iupui.edu and Betty Tonsing, btonsing@aol.com