

My story is her story

“Just yesterday, Dec 1st 2009, I was collecting supplies for an upcoming Christmas camp and saw a child huddled in the corner of a parking lot. This is not a new scene, but I was drawn to look more closely at her. I realized that this child was actually 12 year old Zelda, a girl I have worked very closely with in the past.”

She looked up through a dirty wet hood and saw me. Her eyes lit up like stars and a huge smile came across her face. I leaned down to hug her, smelling the mold and mildew coming from her clothing and body. I sat and talked with her...she told me how she “parks cars” now. She said, if people give her money for protecting their car, she has to give the money to a group of men. She said the men buy her “nice” things and give her bread.”



Anyway, this sounded like a sketchy informal arrangement. I was quite sure it was just another way the gangs were taking advantage of young girls like Zelda. They tell these girls they are pretty, do small kind things for them, then they slowly take control of all their lives often leading to stealing and prostitution.

I could not believe the horrible state of this once beautiful young girl. The dirt on her face, unkempt grubby hair and sickly looking skin. She was sick, she was obviously abused and neglected. It is hard to see one of the children you have worked so hard, go back to living on the streets.

A painting Zelda made before living on the streets.

I said “Zelda, would you like to spend the day with me”. She said “yes tunni” (a word for aunty) She then starts looking around her nervously. I noticed some boys looking at us...they chat with two men in black and call Zelda over...she said “I have to go”. She runs off to the lamp post where the men and boys are standing. One of the boys came back with her. The boy explained to me that if Zelda was to spend the day with me, he had to come too because of all the gangsters. I told the boy he could not come but I promised to return Zelda to where I found her. He said “ok...but soon.”

This is just one of the many situations I find myself in daily. I wish I could help these kids more than just filling their tummies for the day and cleaning them up temporarily.

Money does not help these kids, but time, love and understanding does. This is my full time, volunteer job.



I think to myself... “ I hope this work will have some value.... that the kids will feel that at least one person in the world cares about them. And hopefully, those same kids might expand that kindness to the other kids they live with on the street. And maybe...just maybe make better choices for the future”.

“... I am just a volunteer doing countless hours of social work, programming, counseling street kids and taking children practically into my own home for care. For this work I don't make money to buy my own food or pay my own rent. I only have the money saved from other jobs - other jobs that don't help anybody or anything. Despite this, I will keep running self-esteem and leadership projects for kids like Zelda. These are the only tools available to help them make better choices and someday maybe choose to get off the streets.”

Help One, Help Many



Project Colors has aid workers often work as volunteers until sponsors are found to help them continue their work in a happier and healthier way. It is hard to help others when you can hardly help yourself. However, these aid workers or “agents of change,” persist with their work because their heart and soul drive them to help those in need.

By sponsoring an agent of change, you are helping an aid worker buy food, live in safe accommodation and offer assistance when possible to suffering children. Hundreds of people can be assisted by sponsoring just ONE agent of change. This aid worker will help to organize feeding programs, build pre-schools, improve the safety of homes, find clothing for kids, create educational programs and be on call for emergencies. Project Colors is a nonprofit, volunteer run organization, and its volunteers need to be fed and housed as well. By sponsoring an agent of change you are helping many people.

Why is sponsorship so important to Project COLORS?

Our full time, and project based staff only get money to live on if they are sponsored! Short term volunteers easily agree to volunteer their time, using their savings to live. But long term volunteers, local community members and skilled workers desperately need funds to live on to enable important work to continue and help people and communities

To insure that all funds sent for the children actually get to the children, Project COLORS currently has no funds to assist staff with their own food and accommodation unless they receive personal sponsorships for their work. COLORS is a very small grassroots charity with no office, no regular assessable internet and no landline phones. (Thank God for cell phones.)



However, through volunteer and sponsored efforts, we have been able to make big changes in the lives of children and people in need through:

- Educational sponsorships
- Home creation
- Eco-leadership camps for kids
- Feeding programs
- Counseling and mentorships for youth
- Skills trainings and much, much, more.....

We ask you to please keep these programs going by sponsoring our agents of change, who make all these efforts possible.

In honor of world aids day and volunteers day Dec 5th 2009, please support our agents of change

Example of what is written in our sponsorship cards:

Thank You for Loving Us

Dear _____,

Amazing news! You have helped children in Africa. Through the generosity of a person who loves you, aid workers are being employed to help Africans in need. An "agent of change" has been sponsored in South Africa in your name.



Because you have received this gift, a child in need will have an aid worker, facilitate projects that will build them a pre-school, distribute food, assist with basic health needs and teach skills.

You have received this gift from _____

PDF card campaign:

"No one ever made a greater mistake, than he who did nothing because he could only do a little."

-Edmund Burke

www.projectcolors.com

COLORS International is a youth led charity that strives to assist local overseas projects through the extension of effective, hands on initiatives helping children in need. Our international projects are based on educational activities & basic health with the goal of inspiring children and youth to make the world a better place, one step at a time. Create Hope... Create Change... Create Opportunity... for a child in need, Right now!