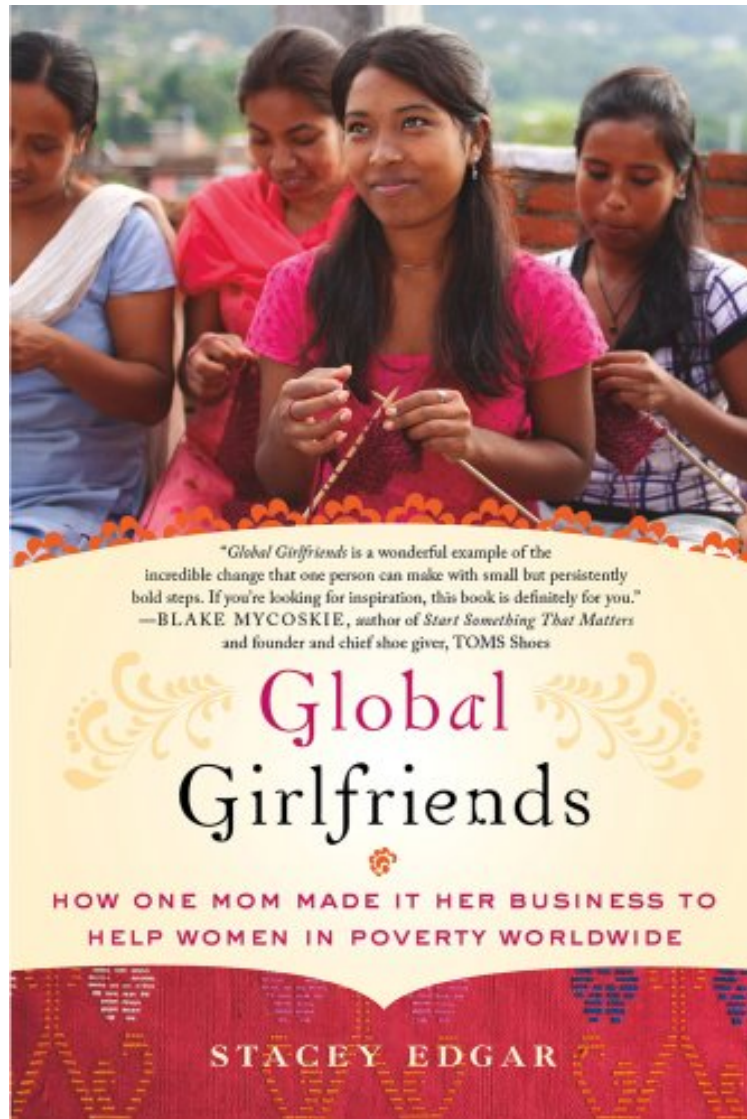


[Download pdf ebook] Global Girlfriends: How One Mom Made It Her Business to Help Women in Poverty Worldwide

Global Girlfriends: How One Mom Made It Her Business to Help Women in Poverty Worldwide

Stacey Edgar

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Stacey Edgar : Global Girlfriends: How One Mom Made It Her Business to Help Women in Poverty Worldwide before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Global Girlfriends: How One Mom Made It Her Business to Help Women in Poverty Worldwide:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fair TradeBy Marilyn MyersAlthough I felt the author might have

said what needed to be said about Fair Trade and her quest to find marketable products in fewer pages, I could appreciate her desire to assist the reader's understanding of the plight of women around the world, the need for quality, the hardships of travel in places unfriendly to women. My book club enjoyed a good discussion and were dismayed to learn that the USA has not ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, a convention adopted in 1979. The battle for women's rights remains an issue. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Kin Finder What a great story. Again, good response to my order 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Inspiring and uplifting By RYZI really appreciated the journey that Stacy took us on. It felt like we toured the world with her, with the fears, challenges, as well as the excitements.

"A heartening story of big dreams and small steps" --Pietra Rivoli, author of *Travels of a T-shirt in the Global Economy* "An engaging read, upbeat and inspiring." --Kirkus "A beautiful example of what one woman can do to improve the lives of thousands worldwide simply by following her heart. Stacey Edgar's story is nothing short of amazing, and it will inspire even the most timid of dreamers to try their hand at making a difference in the world." -- Doc Hendley, author of *Wine to Water a Bartender's Quest to Bring Clean Water to the World*, President/Founder of Wine to Water Nine years ago, Stacey Edgar had a two-thousand-dollar tax return and a deep desire to help provide economic security for women in need. She knew that of the 1.3 billion people living on less than one dollar per day, seventy percent are women. What she didn't have was a business plan. Or a passport. But that didn't stop her from creating Global Girlfriend, a multi-million dollar, socially conscious business that has helped women on five continents feed their families and send their children to school. Global Girlfriends is Stacey's inspiring story of following her convictions, interwoven with the stories of her colleagues and friends real women all over the world, from Guatemala to Nepal, from Haiti to Uganda. It is also a passionate argument for simple actions we can all take to eliminate extreme poverty.

Stacey's story of starting Global Girlfriend is a wonderful example of the incredible change that one person can make with small but persistently bold steps. Being a changemaker has nothing to do with having fancy degrees, lots of resources, or being an 'expert' in philanthropy or business. Every one of us has the capacity to create something special... it just takes creativity and the willingness to face your fears - both of failure and success. If you're looking for inspiration, this book is definitely worth a read. Blake Mycoskie, Founder Chief Shoe Giver, TOMS Shoes Stacey Edgar's Global Girlfriends is a heartening story of big dreams and small steps. Tireless and passionate, Edgar has forged ahead with a beguiling combination of head and heart to create a business model that works for rich and poor alike, linking together women from around the world. Global poverty, like so many seemingly insurmountable problems, can be tackled one girlfriend at a time. Pietra Rivoli, author of *Travels of a T-shirt in the Global Economy* In my work and travels I have been amazed by the ability of women to change not only their own lives, but the lives of their families, and communities as well. I am convinced that no village, community, or town on this planet can be changed for the better without involving the local women. Miss Edgar's story is a beautiful example of what one woman from the west can do to improve the lives of thousands worldwide simply by following her heart. Her idea is simple; help women pull themselves out of poverty and they will pull those around them out as well. However, her story is nothing short of amazing and it will inspire even the most timid of dreamers to get out and try their hand at making a difference in the world. Doc Hendley, President Founder, Wine to Water About the Author STACEY EDGAR started Global Girlfriend in 2003 as a way to provide economic security for women in need by creating a sustainable market for their products. Stacey has been honored by the Microsoft Corporation as a recipient of the company's "Start Something Amazing" awards, and is a sought-after speaker on the topics of women in the global economy, fair trade, sex trafficking, market and enterprise development, cause marketing, entrepreneurship, and parlaying your passion into your career. She lives in Colorado with her family. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. 1 PEACE CORPS REJECT Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a wonderful stroke of luck. THE DALAI LAMA As I watched my twelve-year-old son, Dakota, and his best friend, Robert, standing across from me in the back of an open pickup truck, I could hardly believe we were together in Guatemala. Dakota and Robert had accompanied their mothers, me and Mary-Mike, on a product development trip to work with women weavers and jewelry makers in the Lake Atitlan area. Mary-Mike, my longtime neighbor and dear friend, had been my right hand at Global Girlfriend since early on. Formerly a foreign currency trader at US Bank, she started helping me in my then fledgling basement business when she left corporate America to spend more time at home with her sons. After eighteen years in banking, she didn't mind the change of scenery and never complained about having to climb over my dirty laundry to get to the office. We had come a long way together over the last few years, and this latest journey was Mary-Mike's first to work directly with the women we support. Global Girlfriend started on my dining room table in 2003 based on a big idea to help women in need, but on a very low budget. I convinced my husband, Brad, to let me use our 2002 tax refund of \$2,000 to import products made by women living in poverty. I knew nothing at the time about importing and not much more about fair trade (a market-based approach to solving poverty that aims to help producers in developing countries obtain fair trading conditions and achieve sustainable incomes), a

concept that would become the cornerstone of my company. What I did know was that women in need deserved other women to advocate for them. As a social worker, I had worked for ten years with women and children in the child welfare and social service system. I had come to learn that even in America, the land of opportunity, women are the hardest hit by poverty. Of the 37 million Americans living below the U.S. poverty line, over half are women. But women in the rest of the world fair far worse. Women make up 70 percent of the worlds poor. This statistic came to life for me in January 2000 when my mother-in-law, Brenda Edgar, traveled to Africa with the United Nations World Food Programme. Brenda returned from her journey with stories of hunger, thirst, illness, and lack. But I was more struck by her stories of tenacious women, women who walked miles each day to set out blankets or small tables of handmade goods and sat all day in the hot sun in hopes that just a few foreign aid workers or travelers might want to buy some souvenirs. The necklaces and scarves she brought me as gifts were more than just trinkets from Brenda's travels. These small treasures were proof of the true talent and entrepreneurship of the women she had met. Women who needed a larger market and a broader opportunity than aid workers at the Addis Ababa Hilton could offer. I didn't start Global Girlfriend immediately after Brenda came home. The idea for a business helping women rise out of poverty brewed slowly for a few years, and was always stifled by my own doubts about how to connect with women so far away. In early 2003 I decided to forget about what I didn't know and just jump in, starting a fair-trade business focused specifically on helping women, with all that my good intentions and \$2,000 could buy. The investment went much further than I could have dreamed. In the beginning, Global Girlfriend customers were my girlfriends, my neighbors, and the moms at my kids schools. As my company grew from home parties to an e-commerce Web site, then added a mail-order catalog and a wholesale business, our customer base expanded to twenty thousand women around the country who eagerly used their purchasing power to help their girlfriends around the world gain economic security. In five years, our initial work with seven women's groups had grown into a bona fide women's fair-trade company supporting over fifty women's economic development projects globally. I had wanted Dakota to come with me to Guatemala to see for himself why I am so passionate about working with women in poverty. He had watched me start and grow my business from our home in Colorado, and I wanted him to observe firsthand the impact we were making on people. I also needed his seven years of Spanish classes to help me communicate. Mary-Mike had the same goals for Robert, but when our transportation pulled up we started having second thoughts. She and I exchanged fretful glances when our guides directed us to hop up into the back of the truck. We never let our boys ride bicycles without helmets, and yet here we were letting them ride in the back of an open pickup, brimming with people, traversing a steep gravel road. As this was the only transportation to the government housing resettlement for victims of Hurricane Stan, we climbed in. Celestina was waiting for us. We turned off the main road onto the drive of the resettlement housing. The resettlement was simple and sufficient, but it felt cold and impersonal when compared to the colorful people and places we'd seen in other parts of Guatemala. The cement-block rectangles of government-issued houses were evenly aligned into tidy rows resembling a military barracks. The gray houses stood in bold contrast to the natural setting that surrounded the development. Lush green expanses of palms and pines were dotted with fields cleared for subsistence farming. On the horizon were beautiful hills and valleys that seemed to stretch on forever. Million-dollar views and a survival instinct were the community's greatest assets. I knew that each inhabitant had moved here because of the devastating mud slides brought on by Hurricane Stan in 2005. In the weeks preceding the hurricane, torrential rainstorms had soaked the area with over twenty inches of precipitation. When Stan blew in from the coast, the already saturated ground couldn't absorb the new rains, and flash flooding and mud slides resulted. Whole mountainsides collapsed and engulfed the villages below. An estimated two thousand people lost their lives. Others lost their homes, which three years later were still buried under immovable mounds of earth. Many survivors now lived in this community of cookie-cutter shelters, missing their gardens, their animals, their personal things, and the homes many had built with their own two hands. It made me sad thinking of all they had lost. I couldn't help considering how I would feel if my home was washed away and I was given a lesser space in a new, unfamiliar place. Ducking under a line of hanging laundry, Celestina greeted us warmly just outside the door to her home. She stood less than five feet tall, and was dressed in brilliantly colorful traditional Mayan wear, a huipil blouse and skirt she had woven herself. Her wide smile revealed a lifetime without dental work, and she looked much older than her thirty-six years. Celestina's home had been destroyed in the mud slides that followed Hurricane Stan, and she was trying to rebuild her family's life. Her village of Panabaj had been one of the hardest hit. There, she and her husband had proudly built the only two-story home on their street with their own hands. Their home had been brightly decorated with Celestina's weavings, and the backyard was a large garden, where she grew food for her family and at times had extra produce to sell for a profit in the local market. Her new government-issued house was a twelve-by-twenty-foot cement-block rectangle with a tin roof, a metal door, and no yard. Celestina invited us in, and as we entered, I peered around, carefully trying to make room for our group of five adults and two preteenagers in the confined space. The stark home was separated into two rooms, a small living room and an even smaller bedroom with one tiny bed. There were no carpets, paint, or wall hangings and seemingly few possessions other than some mats under the bed, which were rolled out for the children to sleep on at night, and a few cement blocks stacked in one corner, which were offered to us as seats. But Celestina's prize possessions were clearly visible, taking up much of the minuscule living

space: a long wooden thread separator that looked like a bench with spikes; a thread winder; long thin shuttles wrapped with weft strings; and a backstrap loom attached to the top of the doorjamb. These are the essential tools of a master Mayan weaver. The backstrap loom weaver literally becomes part of her loom. One end of the looms warp strings are attached to a door frame or somewhere with a higher elevation. The weaver then sits on the floor and straps the loom around her back, causing the warp to become taught and firm, able to accept the crisscross of the weft strings that are woven in and out to make a pattern. We each took a seat on our low cement blocks, forming a semicircle around the loom. Celestina settled in the center of the cement floor on a small woven mat she had made herself. Her hands began to weave together the once loose and meaningless threads that found structure woven into harmony on her loom. Stripes of sky blue and purple made up the warp that would become the base for the fabric, and Celestina combined a rainbow of blue, green, yellow, and purple in the weft, skillfully forming shapes that looked like small flowers. Each shuttle held a different color weft string that she passed through the warp with speed and accuracy until a pattern took shape before our eyes. Each thread was suddenly part of something much larger and lovelier than what it had been alone. Celestina's hands never stopped moving as she wove and at the same time recounted the events of the mud slides, which our interpreter, Maria, translated from their native Kathique language. The mud slides that had overwhelmed parts of the peaceful Lake Atitlan area had taken her home, her neighbors homes, and many of her neighbors lives. She and her children had escaped d...