



A MESSAGE FROM GEOFF AND LYNICE

The heat of Summer is drawing to a close and we will soon enjoy pleasant Autumn days. Not long after that we will experience the chill of Winter, followed by the new life Spring brings. Each season has its own appeal and challenges and the changing seasons make life interesting.

Seasons in life, just like seasons in nature, come and go. Geoff's season of twenty-nine years as a lawyer with Warren Graham & Murphy is coming to an end in March. It was a particularly long season! He will be giving more time to Empower to help us transition into our new season – a season of change and growth.

We are continually mindful of the needs of the women we partner with through the sale of their beautiful hand-made products. We have projects that we are seeking to fund during this year and beyond. To bring about the growth we desire, we need to increase our turnover and increase our level of donations. We will again be exploring the option of opening an Empower store in Melbourne or elsewhere. We feel the time is now right to take this significant step. So.... look out for a further update in our next "Friends of Empower" newsletter.

A new season can be simultaneously exciting and daunting. We are embracing the change with all its uncertainty, grateful for the support and encouragement we have from so many. As a friend of Empower, please join us on this journey of change.

Geoff and Lynice Wigney





INTRODUCING STREAMS IN THE DESERT

Empower has enjoyed a close relationship with Streams in the Desert since Lynice first visited them in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in August 2014. There are currently eleven women (and their nine children) in the program, receiving counselling, safe accommodation, child day care, holistic life skills training and a sustainable income.



Lynice visiting the women at Streams in the Desert in May 2016

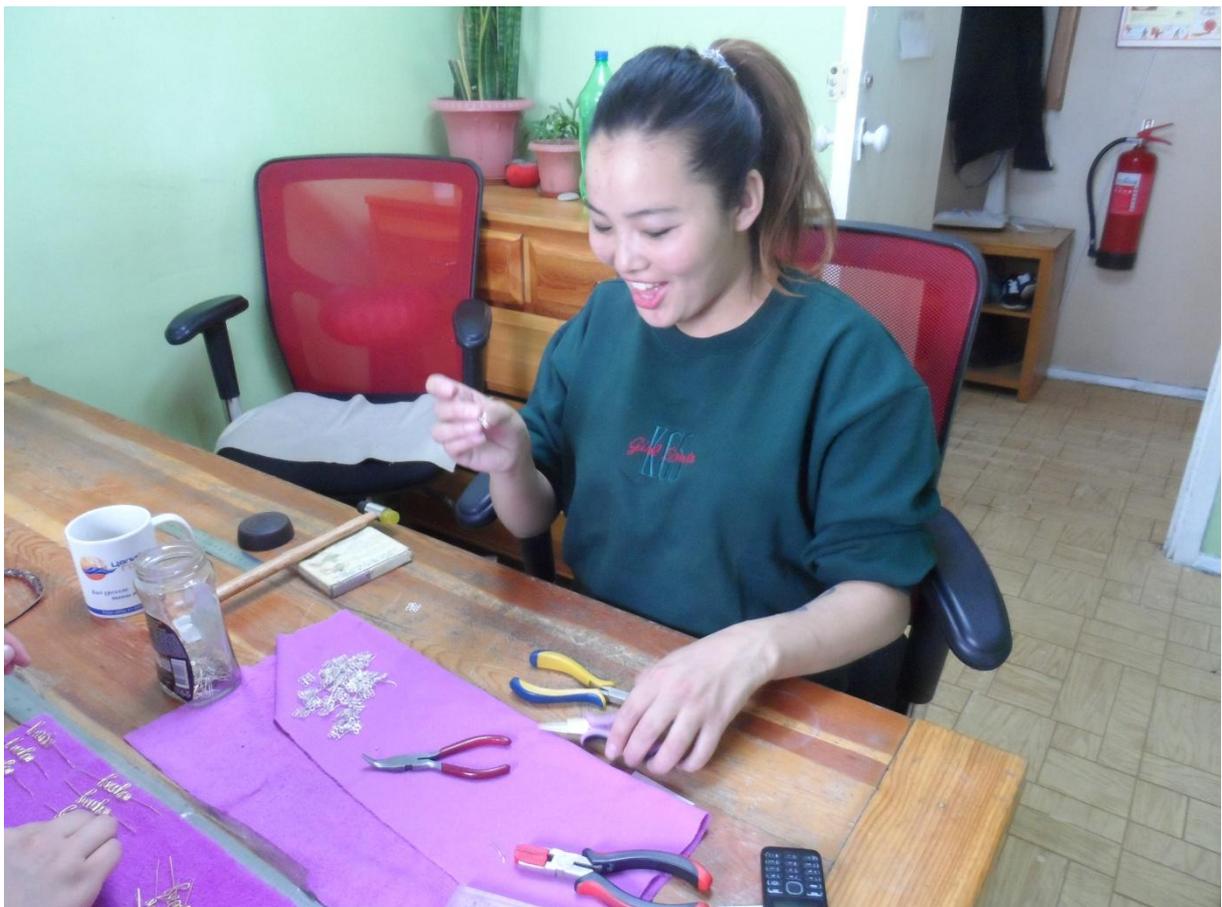
The women have suffered horrible experiences in their past, including violent pimps, drug and alcohol addiction and pregnancy caused through prostitution. Several of the women have previously been imprisoned and the process of restoration is long and involved. Khentii and Belgee, the Mongolian couple who head Streams in the Desert, do an amazing job in caring for the women and helping them deal with a variety of complex issues.

The women make luxuriously soft scarves, mittens, blankets and other products out of recycled cashmere wool, that were formerly jumpers. They also make a selection of beautiful jewellery, often featuring the Mongolian “eternity knot” pattern.





Turning old cashmere jumpers into something new



One of the women creating jewellery with traditional Mongolian eternity knots



When we visited Streams in the Desert in May 2016, it was apparent that the current facilities are inadequate for their needs and provide no room for growth. They have been raising funds for several years and have identified premises that would be ideal for the shelter, child day care and workshop. Empower has just contributed \$20,000.00 towards this project and we will be making further contributions as funds become available, to help make this dream of appropriate premises a reality. We invite you, as “friends of Empower”, to be part of the answer.



The new building that Streams in the Desert would like to use for their shelter, child day care and workshop



BERSEREE'S STORY

Berseree* was adopted when she was a child. When she was a teenager she was sold to an older Korean man to be married and to work as a slave in the rice fields. Berseree escaped and returned to Mongolia and in desperate circumstances, ended up in prostitution. She was controlled by a violent pimp who regularly tortured her brutally. She became addicted to alcohol and suffered the most dreadful abuses.

She was rescued from prostitution and came to Streams in the Desert in 2013. In 2015 her former pimp found her and seriously assaulted her, breaking her nose. Empower funded surgery to repair her face. She still wears the scars from this assault, a permanent reminder of the abuse she has suffered.

When we visited Streams in the Desert in May 2016, we met Berseree and were told how well she was going. She was reliable, hard-working and

courageous. She had the most lovely smile. She was a positive example to the other women and had just been appointed manager of the jewellery business and was about to receive an increase in her salary. Later in 2016 she returned to the streets for a period, succumbing to her alcohol addiction**. She was ultimately found in hospital, having nearly died. Berseree has since recovered physically and has returned to Streams in the Desert and is progressing well. The long process of restoration continues.

No one should have to experience what Berseree has.



*Berseree is not her real name.

**Addiction is a terrible thing, with no quick fix.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Make a donation towards the fitout of our new Empower store.
- Make a donation towards the new shelter, child day care and workshop for Streams in the Desert

You may like to make a one off donation, or arrange a monthly direct debit. Donations can be made in our retail store, on-line or by direct deposit to:

Empower International

Commonwealth Bank

BSB: 063 832

Acc No: 10133769

