

Change your Clothes, Change the World



Creating a  
sustainable future  
Annual Review 2015





## Annual Review 2015

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## *Mission Statement*

Recycle for Change was started on the idea that not only does it make sense to transfer economic and human capital from our part of the world to people and countries in need, it's also the right thing to do. Recycle for Change works to mobilize people and resources to support important sustainable development in the poorest parts of the world, and at the same time to preserve our planet's resources through the promotion of textile recycling.

We provide an opportunity for people to drop off their surplus clothing to be re-used, through collection boxes placed at publicly accessible locations throughout California. The clothing is collected, packed and sold, generating money for the training of volunteers who take part in sustainable development work in Africa, Central and South America.

At Recycle for Change we believe that in order to secure a healthy and prosperous future for all people, we must protect and preserve our planet's natural resources and foster cooperation across cultures.

Recycle for Change's mission is to fight worldwide poverty, to empower ordinary people to do the same, to reduce carbon emissions and create a sustainable future for all. Recycle for Change recognizes that the earth's resources are finite and that preserving these resources is crucial to the well being of future generations.



The work of the volunteers trained at Richmond Vale Academy, has impacted hundreds of poor families and dozens of poor communities in Belize and Ecuador. Without the support from Recycle for Change their training, travel and work in those countries would never have been possible. Most volunteers, when graduating the Fighting with The Poor program, have shifted their focus of life and are dedicating for a lifelong fight shoulder to shoulder with the Poor.

- David Kerkhofs, Teacher at Richmond Vale Academy

## *Becoming a Part of Positive Change in the World*

At Recycle for Change, we want to empower everyone to be a part of positive change in the world.

Recycle for Change was started on the idea that it not only makes sense to transfer surplus from our part of the world to people and countries in need, it is also the right thing to do. Why should we throw perfectly good clothes out to rot in landfills when, on the other side of the world, there are people wearing only rags? Most of us realize that we have a great deal of excess and a genuine problem with waste.

Today, Global Warming is an accepted fact. People worldwide are feeling the real cost of feeding a growing planet and to face the reality that oil and natural gas resources are limited.

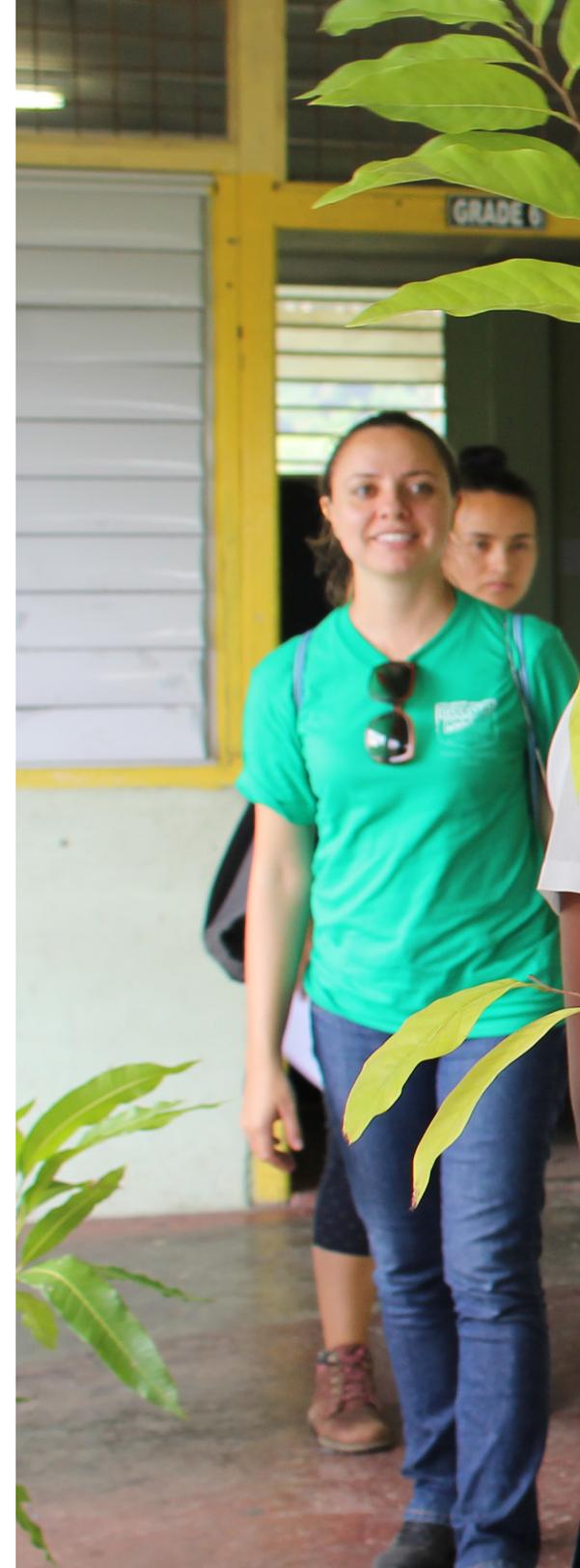
Humanity's perspective on recycling has also considerably changed in the past decade. Not long ago, second- hand clothing was only for those who could not afford to buy new clothes. But now an overwhelming growth in consumerism has resulted in people throwing out much more clothing - often before it is worn out. It goes against our sense of logic and morality to see items being discarded when they still have value. Thus we have seen an impressive growth in clothing recycling as more and more people are actively seeking to buy second hand clothing.

With those ideas in mind, Recycle for Change works to mobilize people and resources to support important sustainable development in the poorest parts of the world, and at the same time to preserve our planet's resources through the promotion of textile recycling.

We provide an opportunity for people to drop off their surplus clothing to be re-used, through collection boxes placed at publicly accessible locations throughout California. The clothing is collected, packed and sold, generating money to support the training of volunteers working in the poorest parts of the globe.

We believe sustainability to be a very important factor. In order to secure a healthy and prosperous future for all people, we must protect and preserve our planet's natural resources.

It's of vital importance that the development in the poorest parts of the world is sustainable as well, so that the growth can continue, and people can continue to improve their lives.



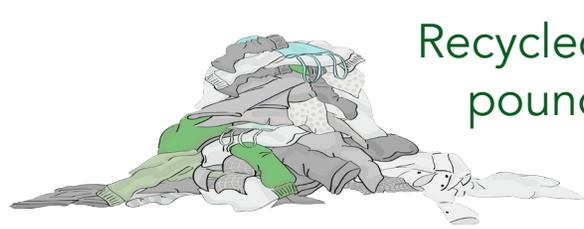


I support nonprofit efforts like Recycle for Change that removes textiles for our landfills, reduces our carbon footprint and contributes to the global sustainability of our planet.

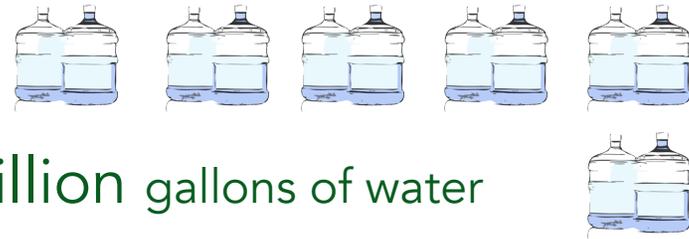
- Dominic Caserta, Santa Clara City Councilmember



# 2015 Highlights



Recycled 10 million pounds of textiles



Saving 12 billion gallons of water

Prevented the release of 70 million pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere.

The equivalent to taking 6,100 cars off the road



Enabled over 160,000 people to donate their unwanted textiles not only helping us fight

climate change, but also enabling us to continue fighting poverty locally and abroad.



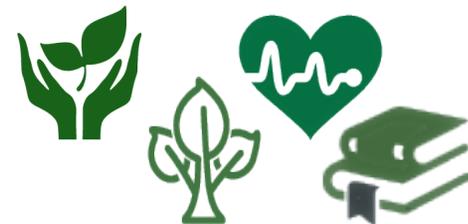
Help create hundreds of jobs



Raised funds to support the training of

138 volunteers who worked in sustainable development projects.

Impacted more than 22,000 beneficiaries through sustainable projects in the areas of Sustainable Agriculture, Education, Health and Environment protection



Recycle for Change has been a leader in serving our community. We are proud to support their efforts to remove textiles, reduce CO2 pollution and provide easy access for our communities to recycle their clothes. Environmental Justice is an issue we take seriously and Recycle for Change is a partner with us in leading this fight.

- California NAACP President  
Alice Huffman



## *How Changing Your Clothes Changes the World in a Circular Economy*

As the effects of climate change become more prevalent with the passing of everyday, it is clear that our current linear model- the take, make and dispose economy which wastes large quantities of materials, energy and labor is no longer a sustainable option and we need a new model.

Our economic model is the circular economy—which aims to eliminate waste. A circular economy takes a systems approach to materials us. The goal of a circular economy is to allow materials to function at their highest and best use all of the time, in turn preventing waste from ending up in landfills. The idea of pulling more value out of materials has economic, social and environmental benefits. The increased popularity of circular economies also lies within the rise of corporate social responsibility and the prevalence of zero-waste regulations and the capitalization on the financial benefits that reuse presents.

Recycle for Change has been adhering to the concept of a circular economy for over 15 years now. Our non-profit is focused on efficiency and ways to close the product loop of textiles. We live in a society that unfortunately values “fast-fashion”. Americans can buy clothes cheaply, which in turn translates into many more discards into the landfill. We are trying to change or at least capitalize on the current throwaway culture, at least until we see a paradigm shift in how people view their “stuff”.

If Americans aren't yet ready to change their mindset on how they purchase and consume textiles, at the very least we can serve as the mechanism to close that loop and allow those resources to be used again. We have built a recycling infrastructure in the Bay Area that is efficient, convenient and effective. Last year, we recycled over 9 million pounds of textiles. Not only is this keeping these discards from ending up in the landfill where they would contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, but it reduces the need for additional virgin materials. But the wonderful thing about how the circular economy works is it doesn't just end there.

This type of system has much further reaching effects that are always something we consider when reviewing operations. What a concept to think that our entire operation is funded by items that would have been discarded in the landfill. The collection program staffs local employees, provides support to local non-profits, supports other local businesses and recyclers and at the end of the day when the recycling program has been paid for, the excess revenue goes on to do even more. Through our supported programs we continue the cycle of the circular economy by funding volunteer programs that in turn send trained volunteers to work in developing countries. They work in a myriad of other areas that have far reaching effects such as small scale sustainable agriculture, tree planting programs, AIDS/HIV education, and teacher training just to name a few.



Using the model of the circular economy the effects are far reaching and looking at the entire scope of our program one can see that it really is true that if you.... CHANGE YOUR CLOTHES YOU CAN CHANGE THE WORLD! So here we are and will continue to be, one t-shirt at a time, trying to change the world.

“Recycle for Change is actively working in the Bay Area to conduct environmental outreach and engage the local youth and we support these efforts.”  
Jacqueline Patterson, Director of the Environmental and Climate Justice Program for the NAACP





## *Supported Programs*

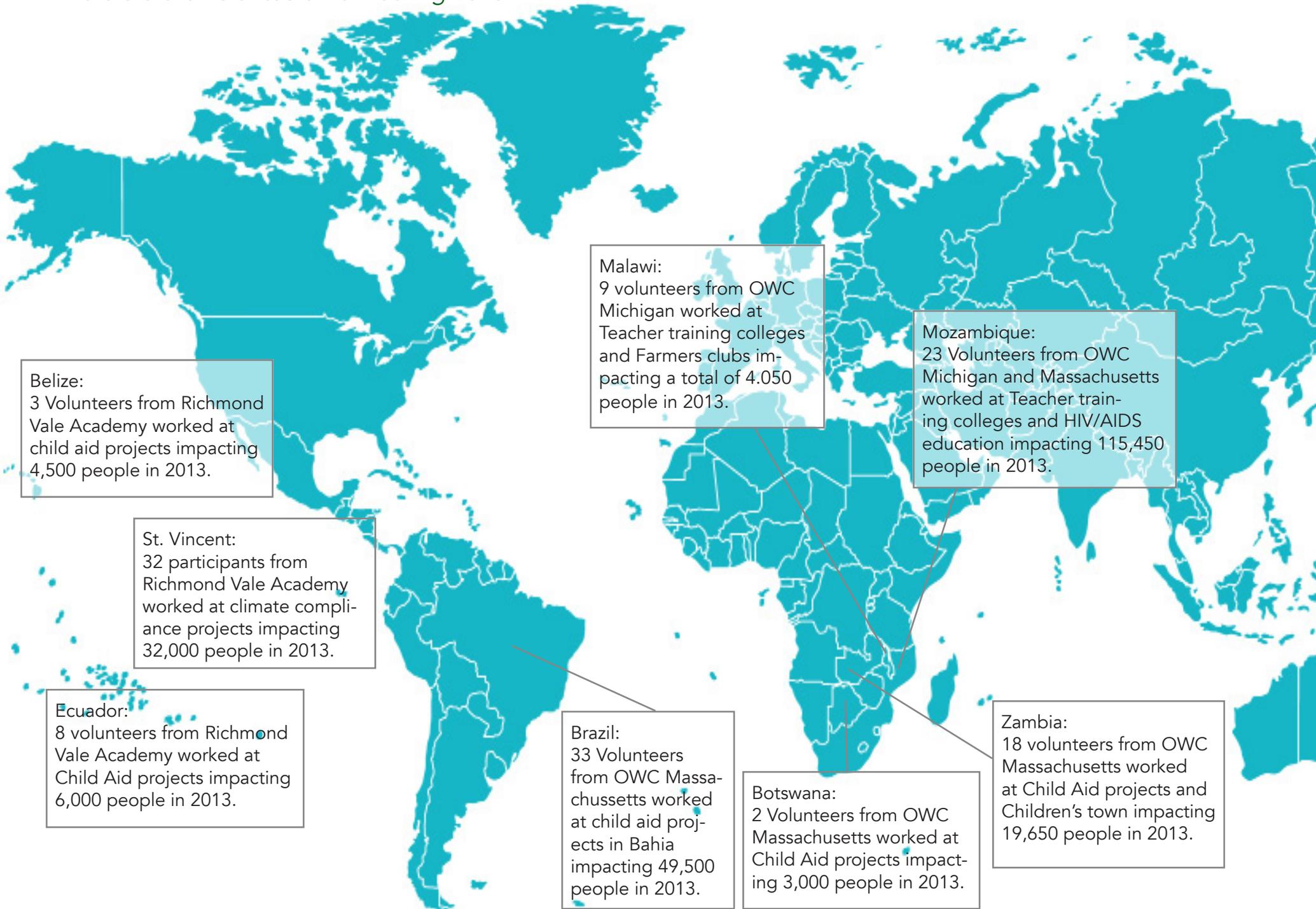
In 2015 Recycle for Change provided over three quarters of a million dollars in grant funding for training of volunteers who engage in sustainable development work in Southern Africa, Central and South America, as well as their local communities.

The volunteers not only learn about the human costs of poverty around the world, but they also have the opportunity to do something about it. Together we are educating communities on how to reduce their risk of infection from preventable diseases. We are educating teachers who are an active part of their communities. We are helping organize and train small-scale farmers to increase food production and improve livelihood. And we are creating a safe and supportive environment where children can develop and grow.

Everyone deserves the same opportunities and we appreciate everyone who gives to our organization either financially or by donating unwanted clothing and shoes. We thank you for your continued support and look forward to continuing the fight in protecting the environment and fighting with the poor to make this world a better place for everyone!



## Where did the Volunteers work during 2013?



Belize:  
3 Volunteers from Richmond Vale Academy worked at child aid projects impacting 4,500 people in 2013.

St. Vincent:  
32 participants from Richmond Vale Academy worked at climate compliance projects impacting 32,000 people in 2013.

Ecuador:  
8 volunteers from Richmond Vale Academy worked at Child Aid projects impacting 6,000 people in 2013.

Malawi:  
9 volunteers from OWC Michigan worked at Teacher training colleges and Farmers clubs impacting a total of 4,050 people in 2013.

Mozambique:  
23 Volunteers from OWC Michigan and Massachusetts worked at Teacher training colleges and HIV/AIDS education impacting 115,450 people in 2013.

Brazil:  
33 Volunteers from OWC Massachusetts worked at child aid projects in Bahia impacting 49,500 people in 2013.

Botswana:  
2 Volunteers from OWC Massachusetts worked at Child Aid projects impacting 3,000 people in 2013.

Zambia:  
18 volunteers from OWC Massachusetts worked at Child Aid projects and Children's town impacting 19,650 people in 2013.

#### Child Aid:

The project, among other activities, includes building pre-schools, organizing youth clubs, offering adult literacy classes, water and food security or initiatives that help reduce maternal and infant deaths.

#### Teacher Training:

The project focuses on the training of primary school teachers for the rural areas.

#### Climate compliance:

The projects focus on energy, water, food and disaster security.

#### Children's Town:

Primary and secondary school providing education for orphans and other children whose situation has caused them to stop attending school and in many cases live on the street.

#### TCE:

A community mobilization program focused on preventing HIV transmission.

#### Farmer's Club:

The project trains small-scale farmers in sustainable agriculture practices such as conservation farming, and equips them with knowledge they can use to adjust to the changing conditions.



## *Richmond Vale Academy Climate Center*

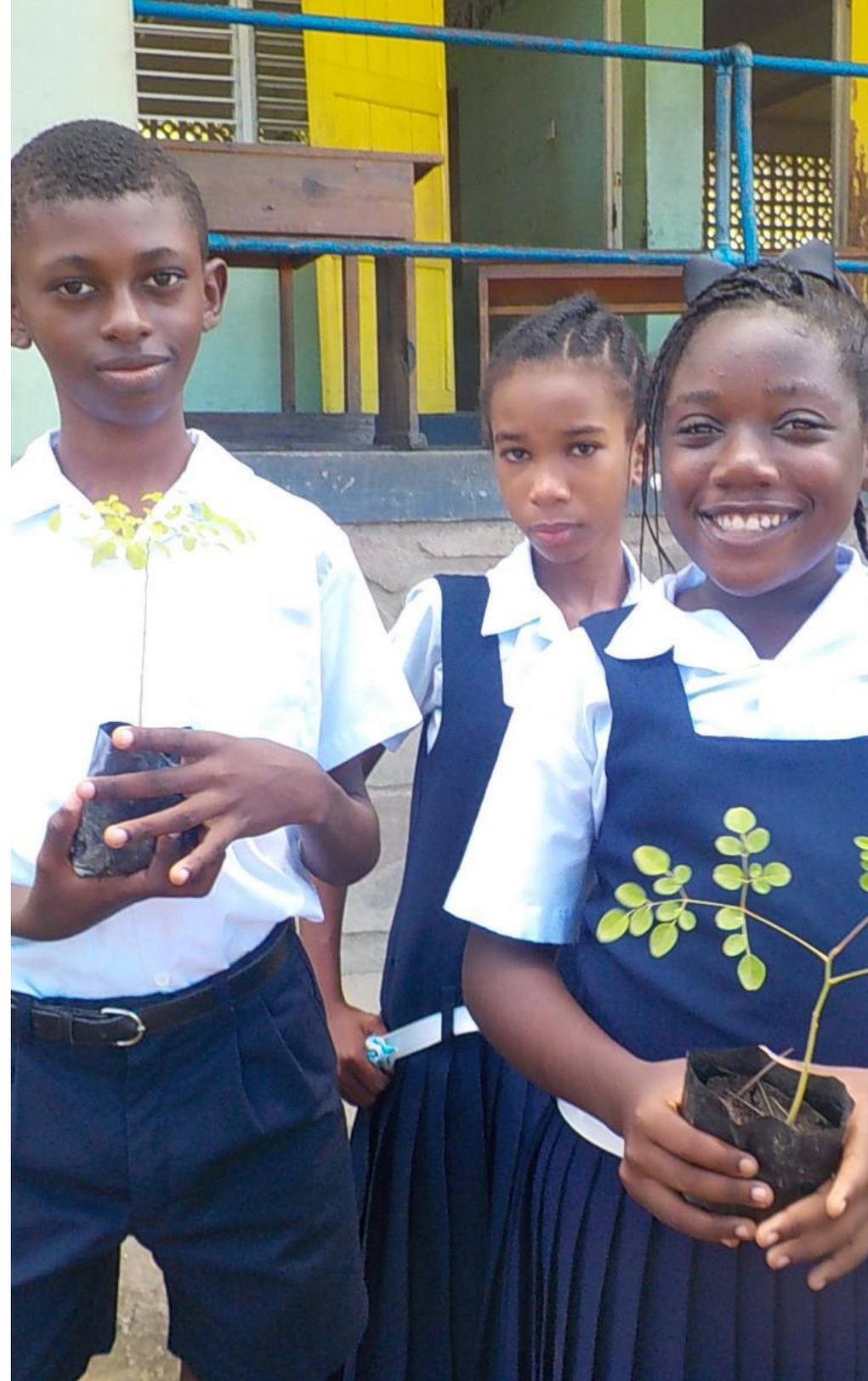
Richmond Vale Academy, one of Recycle for Change's supported non-profit, is developing its campus to be a model for everyone in St. Vincent, in terms of sustainable living. About 1500 visitors come by the climate center at the school each year to learn from all the programs taking place at the Climate Center.

The aim of the climate center is to make the center where the school is located, and eventually the entire country, climate compliant and self-sustaining. The aim is to produce nearly all of the food ourselves, to be carbon neutral with energy and water and to be ready for the effects of climate change.

Using Permaculture principles, in 2015 a big step forward was made in terms of healthy organic food production. All of the fruit and vegetables, and nearly all the meats that are consumed at the academy are produced at the campus. The intensive vegetable garden is since 2015 producing all fresh vegetables consumed at the school and a Food Forest is being developed, where through agro-forestry methods, food is produced in several layers of vegetation. Chicken and pigs provide eggs and meat to students and teachers at the academy while fish is bought from local fishermen. This not only gives food for the climate center but serves as a model for local farmers to learn from.

In 2015 the academy purchased and shipped solar panels to St. Vincent and during 2016 the panels will be installed and energy at the academy will be carbon neutral and zero-emission by being completely off the grid.

Rainwater is being harvested to provide water for irrigating the plants, for washing machines and showers. During 2016 a big water reservoir will be installed to have enough water the whole year through. In 2015 a grey water system was built, filters are used to clean the water from washing machines and showers, so it can be further used to irrigate the fields.



During 2015, the center has moved away from using chemicals for cleaning purposes. They are now using organic materials for cleaning and are producing their own dishwashing soap.

## Making an entire country Climate Compliant

While developing the climate center at the academy, teachers and students are also working to make St. Vincent and the Grenadines climate compliant by spreading awareness, teaching and organizing actions in local communities.

In 2015, 3 Organic Model Farms were started and developed in different communities in the country. A campaign was carried out to teach everyone in the country about the dangers and effects of growing and eating Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). Teachers and students from the academy worked with farmers in the area surrounding the school to assist in the transition to growing organically.

2 newspapers were published, 6,000 copies each, to spread information about climate change related topics and organic farming to mobilize the nation to take action. 20 informational radio programs were produced and aired for the same reasons.

Communities were mobilized for clean-up actions; cleaning beaches, rivers and neighborhoods. Recycling points were installed and promoted through recycling rallies, where several tens of thousands of plastic bottles and cans were recycled.

A tree planting campaign brought students and teachers from Richmond Vale Academy to all schools in St. Vincent and the Grenadines where lessons were given about the importance of trees, climate change and its effects and environmental conservation. At each school, trees were planted together with the school children.





During the worldwide ENO Treelympics 2015, a worldwide competition for tree planting, St. Vincent and the Grenadines won the Gold Medal for the most active tree planting country in the world.

A conservation project was started at Richmond Beach, where planting mangrove trees will protect and enhance the environment in the area and protect the beach for sea level rise and salinization of the lands.

The progress will continue during 2016 while the academy continues to work together with the people of St. Vincent to make the country Climate Compliant.



We have planted thousands of trees, taught children in 100 schools about the importance of trees in protecting our environment. This was only possible because of the support we receive from Recycle for Change.

Kata Lovassy, Teacher at Richmond Vale Academy



## *Local Community involvement*

### San Francisco Zero Waste Grant

The City of San Francisco's Zero Waste grant program is dedicated to funding projects that divert waste from San Francisco's landfill, thereby assisting the City in achieving its goal of zero waste by 2020. In 2015, Recycle for Change applied for and was awarded a Zero Waste grant in order to enrich our current collection program via additional equipment, staff and outreach in order to properly serve SF residents and support San Francisco's target of Zero Waste by 2020. Our goal is to make textile recycling easy and convenient to all residents, regardless of what region of the city they live in or what demographic they fit in. In placing boxes in publicly accessible areas we will be targeting underserved areas of the city such as Bayview, Chinatown, Richmond District, Sunset District, Mission District, and Hunter's Point.

Our project proposal is to place 50 additional boxes throughout the city. With this increase in new sites we will be able to serve all areas of the city. Our grant cycle started on March 8th and the funding will supply the seed money site additional locations to serve San Franciscans throughout the city, both in spaces accessible to the public and in multi-family dwellings. As our historical data shows, residents utilize these boxes, so much so that many of boxes are on a daily pickup schedule and the addition of more locations will further work to diverting the 4,600 pounds of textiles that go to the landfill every hour. With these funds, together with SF Department of Environment, we hope to see a point at which no textiles end up in the landfill.

Our Home. Our City. Our Planet.



**SF Environment**

## The NAACP Formally Endorses Recycle for Change Environmental Stewardship

In October 2015, Recycle for Change representatives attended the NAACP California-Hawaii Chapter Annual Conference in Manhattan Beach, CA. Recycle for Change took part on the Environmental Justice panel, where discussions made the link between climate change and environmental justice clear to all who took part. It was clear that the NAACP must be at the forefront in promoting environmental stewardship particularly because economically disadvantaged communities are often hit the hardest and the NAACP must be a voice for those whose voices are seldom heard, a fact that Recycle for Change knows all too well from being on the front lines of development work in some of the hardest hit countries where the poor have no voice.

Climate change has a disproportionate impact on communities of color in the United States and abroad. The NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program's purpose is to educate and mobilize communities to address this human and civil rights issue. One topic that kept resurfacing was the need for enriching youth engagement. The key to bringing environmental issues to the forefront and enacting meaningful change begins with engaging our youth, teaching environmental justice issues in the classroom, and finding ways to get youth involved hands on in climate action.

Through Recycle for Change's educational grants, today's youth, the future leaders of tomorrow are trained to specifically to address climate change and do volunteer work in some of the hardest hit communities, gaining not only knowledge, but first-hand experience on tackling climate change on the grassroots level. Today's climate issues are more than melting ice caps and starving polar bears, today's issues are hitting home. As the conference in Manhattan Beach was occurring, Mexico's coast was getting hit by the largest hurricane on record. Occurrences like Hurricane Patricia and Hurricane Katrina, flash floods, out of control forest fires and long term droughts can all be linked back to climate change. And these disasters all too often hit communities of color disproportionately which made it all the more clear that the NAACP needed to take action to support environmental groups in combatting climate change.

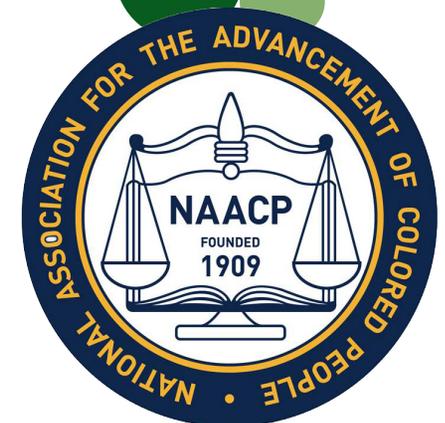
At the close of the conference, a resolution formally acknowledged Recycle for Change as a partner of the NAACP in promoting environmental stewardship through the recycling of textiles and also promoting environmental justice by giving back to communities that are most heavily affected by the issue of climate change.

Recycle for Change is proud and honored to have such a powerful resolution enacted by the NAACP. The fight against climate change and poverty will continue and is strengthened by this new partnership. To view the resolution in its entirety please visit [www.recycleforchange.org](http://www.recycleforchange.org).

Recycle for Change has been a leader in serving our community. We are proud to support their efforts to remove textiles, reduce CO2 pollution and provide easy access for our communities to recycle their clothes. Environmental Justice is an issue we take seriously and Recycle for Change is a partner with us in leading this fight.

- California NAACP

President Alice Huffman



## Partnering with the City of San Francisco to reduce textile waste

In January 2014 the City and County of San Francisco launched the Zero Waste Textile Initiative encouraging residents and businesses to recycle unwanted apparel, footwear and other textiles. As a partner in San Francisco's Zero Waste Textile Initiative we have been looking for ways to expand textile recycling to ALL resident in the great city of San Francisco. In the summer of 2015, Recycle for Change started a program with the San Francisco Housing Authority to provide free textile recycling services to its residents and the surrounding community.

The SFHA has over 40 sites that provide much needed affordable housing to low income San Franciscans. This partnership will not only help keep these resources from the landfill, but will also help to keep trash costs down for SFHA and also help to support the charitable work that RFC does both locally and abroad.

To date, Recycle for Change has placed 18 textile collection boxes at SFHA sites throughout San Francisco. In the initial 3-6 months that those boxes started being utilized in 2015 we diverted over 21,000 pounds of textiles! And we expect to divert much more than that when the boxes have been there for a full 12 month period. Great start SF Housing Authority residents!

In addition to providing these services, RFC is committed to supporting the SFHA and its communities in other ways too. RFC donated over 200 children's books for distribution at SFHA's Sunnydale location for their Backpacks for Kids event in August, as well as provided educational outreach on the importance of textile recycling. This is just one of the many ways we give back to our local communities.

"Working with Recycle for Change educates our residents on the importance of recycling, and creates awareness about the significance of diverting textiles from landfills."  
Barbara Smith, Acting Executive Director of the San Francisco Housing Authority.



## Fighting to stamp out hunger in Oakland

Despite the progress the economy has made since the Great Recession, the Alameda County Food Bank statistics show that in 2010, 1 in 6 members of Alameda County relied on their services. In 2014 that number rose, rather than decreased to 1 in 5 relying on their services.

Many organizations are hard at work in Oakland to build stronger, healthier and more resilient communities. A partner organization of Recycle for Change is the long-standing group run by Sister Alice Muhammad, which as of April 2015, is now known as: Helping Hands-Together We Thrive.

Sister Alice is estatic to have a new non-profit 501c3 that is set up under her supervision and control. In taking this new step she can build better relationships directly with the vendors who are donating unwanted items and she is already dreaming up new vendors to partner with. First on her list are NuCal Eggs, Trader Joes, Walmart, Coca Cola and Gatorade. "So much is wasted by corporations who have product that that cannot sell, and there is such a need here in our community for food. The people in East Oakland aren't worrying about what new car they're going to buy or what excursion they're going on next weekend, they're worried about if they are going to be able to keep the roof over their kids' head and where the next meal is coming from."

That is where Helping Hands comes in. Run entirely by volunteers, Helping Hands supports the East Oakland community by providing families with meals support for the week. Each Saturday, rain or shine, East Oaklanders line up early out in front of the Rainbow Recreation Center and wait patiently for a bag of food and other supplemental items that are handed out by Helping Hands volunteers.

It truly takes a village and Sister Alice and her team of community volunteers work throughout the week, every day, receiving and processing donations from the food bank. These items are then inventoried, sorted and portioned out into about 300 bags that are distributed to those in need each Saturday morning. The concept started small when Sister Alice started handing out food at local parks to the homeless out of the trunk of her car and has now grown to the operation it is today.

But Sister Alice isn't stopping there. With the help from Recycle for Change, the new 501 c3 will allow Sister Alice the potential to expand. With Recycle for Change's help Sister Alice hopes to secure the funding for her own location to operate out of, as she has overgrown the small space that she occupies at the Rainbow Center. But a big step like this is going to take a lot of work and support from the surrounding community as well, as that is the foundation that keeps Helping Hands growing year after year.

It is clear to me through the actions of this great organization that they are thoroughly committed to their focus of protecting the environment and fighting poverty. They are not just fighting poverty in developing countries, but also right here in Oakland.

Sister Alice, Helping Hands - Together We Thrive



Norther California Recycling Association and the challenge of Zero waste

March 20, 2015 marked the second annual Resilience Climate Change Expedition, originally inspired by Al Gore's Climate Reality Project's 2012 call to action. The Climate Reality project challenged individuals to conduct climate change expeditions within their own communities and Resilience, an action figure for Zero Waste, took up the charge.

Jessica Robinson (otherwise known as her superhero alias Resilience), formed the first Climate Change Expedition to tour examples of Zero Waste infrastructures in the Bay Area. During the Zero Waste Week, the 2nd rendition of Climate Change Expedition took participants to DR3 (a mattress recycling facility), Rock the Bike (a company who uses bikes to power their operations), Planting Justice (a social justice organic farming organization), and Recycle for Change. The expedition was filmed as a part of a documentary that continues the conversation of how local communities can become the solution to the global crisis of climate change.

Attendees of the tour stopped by the Recycle for Change warehouse for a full tour of the facilities, examining the ins and outs of the collection program. Attendees ranged from young to old and all were full of questions, many gazing in wonderment at the sheer amount of "stuff" that people discard. The attendees also took part in a in depth discussion on how our insatiable consumerism ends with our facing a mounting problem of what to do with these items when they no longer serve a purpose. The group was very engaged and left with a better understanding of how to prevent unwanted but reusable items from going to the landfill.

# Resilience

Climate Change Expedition  
Friday March 20  
Impact Hub Oak

**Climate Change Expedition  
looking at local solutions to  
our global crisis.**



Morning snacks













