



# One Dollar For Life Media Backgrounder

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If we could change the world for a dollar, would we? Well, it turns out that we *can*. So, the real question becomes: *will* we? That is the essential idea of One Dollar For Life (ODFL): that we actually *can* change the world, with a dollar. So, let's do it.

One Dollar For Life is 501c3 nonprofit. It was started by a high school teacher in California. He was saddened by how impotent his students felt in dealing with the problems in the world.

That was in 2007. The economy was entering the greatest collapse since the Great Depression. Parents were losing their jobs. Families were losing their homes. The students' distress was real.

Robert Freeman, a social studies teacher at Los Altos High School in Los Altos, CA, suggested to his students that if they would each do the smallest bit *but all do it*, the effect would be enormous. He challenged every student in his school to donate just one dollar.

Freeman said that if they would do that, he would get a classroom built for them in Africa. His school had 1,700 students at the time. They donated \$1,851.

But \$1,851 was not enough to get a classroom built. So, Freeman went to four other schools where he knew teachers, two in the San Francisco Bay area and two in Southern California. The proposition was the same to all of the schools: let's see if we can't do something great for the world, and in the process show ourselves our own capacity to bring goodness into the world.

The five schools raised a total of \$9,111 and in the summer of 2007 Freeman and a group of 8 students helped build a stone [classroom in Naro Moru, Kenya](#). One Dollar For Life was born.

Since then, ODFL has [completed 120 additional projects](#) in 10 of the poorest countries in the world, all of it funded by donations as small as \$1.

These include classrooms, medical clinics, computer labs, latrines, irrigation systems, and more. A high-level view of each of these [projects can be seen at \[odfl.org\]\(http://odfl.org\)](#). All are small-scale infrastructure or health services projects that dramatically improve life chances for some of the poorest people on earth. For example:

- [Birthing Centers in Nepal](#) are reducing the number of mothers dying in childbirth by more than 90%, and babies by 95%.
- By providing [cows to an orphanage in Kenya](#), ODFL is helping feed the orphans daily protein for \$2 per child per year.
- A new [water well in Manyesa, Malawi](#) enables a doubling of the calories available to the residents of the village of Manyesa. The cost works out to \$.25 (25 cents) per person per year.
- Twelve [classrooms in Nicaragua](#) have dramatically improved the educational opportunities for thousands of Nicaraguan school children.
- ODFL's [Girls' Equality Project](#) provides reusable sanitary supplies to teenage girls in Kenya, Zambia, South Africa and Nepal. These kits cost \$5, but are given to the girls free of charge. They last for three years, often long enough for the girls to finish school.
- A series of [47 latrines built](#) for the residents of Ban, a small village on the island of Bali, in Indonesia, has helped get E.coli bacteria out of the water supply.

ODFL works with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, South Africa, Nepal, Myanmar, Indonesia, Nicaragua, Mexico and Haiti to carry out its projects. All of ODFL's NGO partners meet strict standards.

They must be nonprofit and have at least a five-year track record in the field in which they are working. They must not discriminate in hiring on the basis of gender, religion, ethnicity or other factors. Every dollar spent must be accounted for.

Historically, ODFL has raised funds for its projects from high schools and middle schools, mainly in California. More than 400,000 teenagers have given \$1 to help fund all of ODFL's projects.

In the summer of 2018, ODFL introduced an online fundraising tool, *Change, for a Dollar*. This tool allows anybody, from anywhere in the world, to quickly and easily donate as little as one dollar to a specific project, and then follow the progress of that project until completion.

ODFL expects that *Change, for a Dollar* will substantially increase the reach of its message and offer. It hopes that millions of people, of all ages and from across the country, will give the smallest amount so that the world can be a better place.

ODFL has raised funds from private foundations to cover its "back office expenses." These include phones, literature, travel, website hosting and more. All of ODFL's workers are volunteers. As a result, *every dollar donated by an individual* goes to the project they have designated.

There are [three fundamental components](#) to ODFL's vision and mission. They are:

- Reduce human suffering by building small scale infrastructure projects that allow the poorest people in the world to better provide for their own growth and sustenance.
- Build a generation of "Bigger People." The Bigger People are those who realize the nobility in helping others, and discover a new-found competence to bring goodness into the world. It's ODFL's belief that an entire generation of such people *will* bring about a better world.
- Shift the culture, even if ever so slightly, from one centered on the ethic of "I'm getting mine, screw you," to one of, "We're all in this together." The challenges faced by humanity today — global warming; ozone depletion; ecosystem destruction; pandemics; etc. — require a consciousness of common identity, the engagement of all people, and a collective means to address.

ODFL believes that the bigger person we all want to believe is inside of us is actually there. But we do have to exercise it to give it its power. That is the fundamental offer of ODFL: that if we will each do the smallest bit, *but all do it*, we really *can* change the world. It's working.