



Global Sisters

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 1 August 2014

For immediate release

CANBERRA'S OWN GLOBAL SISTERS

PART OF ONLY AUSTRALIAN FINALIST IN INTERNATIONAL FUNDING COMPETITION

A group of refugee and migrant women in Canberra are part of an organisation that's just been announced as the only Australian finalist in the international *Project Inspire* funding program.

Canberra has quickly emerged as the national focal point of [Global Sisters](#), a new online platform that's helping excluded women to earn an income and find security through their own business.

Now it's one of only 10 finalists hand-picked from over 500 entries received from 70 different countries (it's understood around 20 entries were received from the Australia-Oceania region).

[Project Inspire: 5 Minutes to Change the World](#) is a joint initiative from the Singapore Committee for UN Women and MasterCard, with a \$25,000 grant on offer to the successful applicant.

Global Sisters founder Mandy Richards is a passionate entrepreneur of some 20 years experience who is well-known locally as the inaugural manager of the highly successful ACT Social Enterprise Hub.

Ms Richards said the concept behind Global Sisters is to create an 'online village' and a safe, supportive space for women starting out in business.

"The women we are supporting are financially excluded and marginalised due to a number of complex barriers including culture, language, mental illness and generational unemployment," said Ms Richards.

"We work on three levels: by offering a free business directory for social enterprise and small businesses, an e-marketplace where setting up an online shop is quick, easy and free; and a micro-finance program that includes initial business loans of up to \$1000," she said.

"Our mission is 'financial independence for female entrepreneurs' and we really are an Australian first, in that we offer a complete end-to-end model that helps a woman overcome the many – otherwise unaddressed – barriers she might encounter in moving away from welfare reliance and establishing a sustainable business."

So far, a long list of local photographers, writers, designers and 'wise women' business advisors have signed on to provide pro-bono services, offer advice, and use their knowledge and experiences to connect with women in need.

Included among them are Canberra's own digital storyteller [Jennifer Thompson](#), designer [Samorn Sanixay](#), former ACT MLA [Amanda Bresnan](#), photographer and restaurateur [Lorna Sim](#), and communications practitioner [Jane Speechley](#).

In addition, over 600 'sisters' and organisations are being supported by Global Sisters already, including: [Jennifer Lowe](#) from Burma, [Pakao Sorn](#), also from Burma, and [Tamara Kadhim](#), originally from Iraq - all of whom are now call Canberra home.

Ms Richards said the *Project Inspire* funds would provide a huge boost to Global Sisters' work in Canberra and around the country.

"If our submission to partner with UN Women is ultimately successful, the grant would allow us to launch a micro-finance demonstration project supporting refugee and migrant women in Australia," said Ms Richards.

To arrange an interview or access high quality images, please contact Mandy Richards directly on 0448 644 600 or mandy@globalsisters.org.



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“The opportunity means we will be able to provide micro-loans and integrated business advisory, marketing support and access to an online sales platform for a minimum of 20 women.

“Once the project has concluded, we’ll evaluate and document the model so it’s ready to be called-up for use in other parts of Australia and overseas,” she said.

Global Sisters’ Hawanatu Bangura, 25, will now travel to Singapore to participate in a week-long social business bootcamp, and to represent the organisation in the *Project Inspire* Grand Final live pitch on 30 August.

A People’s Choice Award is also on offer, and members of the public can vote for Global Sisters by visiting the [Project Inspire Facebook](#) page. Voting is open now and closes on Friday 29 August.

To find out more, visit www.globalsisters.org.

Images: Just a few of our Canberra-based Global Sisters – clockwise from top left, Tamara Kadhim, Jennifer Lowe, Samorn Sanixay and Pakao Sorn.



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