

## AFRICA BAGS, INC.

Africa Bags, Inc. is a non-profit organization focused on creating economic opportunity in the African country of Malawi. By selling cloth grocery bags made in Malawi, we will provide a sustainable income opportunity for its residents. Additionally, use of these bags will diminish the need for environmentally hazardous plastic grocery bags.

The creation of Africa Bags was inspired by three main goals: To help a country in desperate need, to form a charitable organization in which all donations and profit would go directly to the people for which it was formed, and to do something beneficial for the environment.

Africa Bags sells reusable cloth grocery bags to the public. These bags are made in Malawi, Africa. In May of 2007, Africa Bags entered into three villages in Malawi with production packages. These packages included treadle sewing machines, cloth and materials for the first 200 bags. Profits from the sale of these



Bags go back to the villages that produced them, providing long term solutions to their day to day struggles.

Most charitable efforts result in a short-term fix for the extreme poverty in Africa; the underlying issues that created the problem still exist. Africa Bags' goal is to provide a long-term solution for the people of Malawi.



By creating a sustainable economy in the poorest villages, Africa Bags can give the Malawians an opportunity to provide for themselves. The cycle of poverty can then be broken.

Africa Bags, Inc. is a 501 c non profit corporation. Donation of money or services will be tax deductible. Purchase of cloth grocery bags will provide a long-term, sustainable benefit to the environment and to the people of Malawi.

## MALAWI, AFRICA

Malawi is a landlocked African nation, approximately the size of Pennsylvania, with a population of 12 million people. The average life expectancy is only 37 years and falling, primarily due to the high rate of AIDS, malaria and waterborne illnesses. Malawi has been called the "perfect storm" of human deprivation. It is one of the world's least developed and poorest countries. Ninety percent of the inhabitants live in rural areas, relying on subsistence farming as their sole source of income.



Malawi has limited natural resources. While surrounding African countries contain vast amounts of gold, diamonds and other resources, Malawi does not. Its Gross Domestic Product is just \$650 per person, per year. To put this in perspective, the Gross Domestic Product for an American is over

\$40,000 per year. By producing the cloth grocery bag, the Malawians can create a sustainable economy for themselves. They can then provide for themselves instead of having to rely on charity. This change will empower the people of Malawi.

## PROBLEMS WITH PLASTIC

Trillions of plastic bags have been produced since their introduction over 30 years ago. The production of these bags depletes the earth's non-renewable resources. Like all plastics, these bags are made from petroleum. The U.S. uses over **100 billion bags** annually, an equivalent of throwing away over 12 million barrels of oil per year.

Over **85 billion** bags are thrown away each year in the U. S. alone. A discarded plastic bag takes over 1,000 years to degrade. As bags decompose, toxic wastes are released into the environment, polluting our land, air, and water. Hundreds of thousands of bags are eaten by animals each year. Cows, sea turtles, goats, whales and other animals fall victim to the hazards of plastic bags. In countries such as South



Africa, discarded plastic bags are a major eyesore. Often carried from land fills by the wind, discarded plastic bags are often seen hanging in bushes, floating in lakes and rivers, flapping from fences, spoiling landscapes and choking innocent animals.

Plastic bags have become so prevalent in South Africa that they are mockingly referred to as the "national flower."

With increased awareness of global warming and other environmental issues, the use of plastic bags will continue to be scrutinized and, hopefully minimized. Many countries now have either a plastic bag ban or a plastic bag tax in place. Bag taxes, typically around \$.15, have been imposed in Ireland, South Africa, Denmark, Scotland, and Switzerland. Bangladesh and Taiwan have banned single-use plastic bags.

Ikea, a worldwide furnishing chain, has begun to charge shoppers \$0.05 per plastic bag. Safeway refunds \$.05 to shoppers that bring in their own cloth shopping bags. Recently, San Francisco approved a ban on plastic grocery bags. It is probable that many other U.S. cities will follow suit. As environmental issues continue to gain momentum, the demand for cloth shopping bags will increase. Africa Bags will be on the cutting edge of this emerging market for cloth shopping bags.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can help us help them by purchasing a bag from Africa Bags. Each bag has been signed by the village that created it. You can go to our website and learn more about the specific village you are helping. You can also



help by telling friends and family about Africa Bags, and by visiting the [africabags.org](http://africabags.org) web site to find a specific project to make a tax deductible donation to.

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