

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **CHICKENS FOR THE CHILDREN**

*“We have set out to prove that chickens can help save the world, and it’s starting by changing the lives of some of Zambia’s most vulnerable children.”*

*- Rich Johnson, CEO, Spark Ventures*

Chicago, May 12, 2011 – Spark Ventures, an international nonprofit organization based in Chicago, recently made a 100K investment to fund the construction of a poultry farm in Lusaka, Zambia. The profits from the farm will be reinvested in Spark’s grassroots partner, Hope Ministries, a locally led Zambian organization supporting hundreds of orphaned and under-resourced children. This social enterprise is at the heart of Spark’s strategy to provide sustainable solutions to educate and empower children living in extreme poverty.

Spark Ventures first partnered with Hope Ministries of Zambia in 2007, supporting Hope’s mission to serve children in the impoverished Twapia community through a school that offers free education, nutrition, clean water and health care to over 300 students. Spark has not only provided consistent funding for operations, but has also increased Hope’s human and physical capacity through staff training, organizational development and investment in capital projects including a new school and orphanage facilities.

The poultry farm will generate local income, becoming a source of stable and sustainable revenue for Hope’s work with the children of Zambia. Rich Johnson, CEO, comments that “One of Spark’s primary goals is to give grassroots organization a path to financial sustainability and to avoid the dependence on traditional aid programs. In addition to providing Hope with a steady and substantial local revenue

stream, the farm will also provide job skills training for high school students and employment opportunities for base of the pyramid workers.”

In an intentional effort to nurture local leadership and talent, Spark worked directly with the leaders of Hope Ministries to develop the business plan, oversee the farm’s construction and begin operations. Once expanded to full capacity, the farm will produce nearly 200,000 chickens per year and will generate roughly \$100,000 annually for Hope Ministries’ operations. The farm’s recent launch with a cycle of 5,000 chickens is a promising milestone as Spark and partner Hope Ministries look to leverage this business to educate and empower children in Zambia for years to come. Additionally, the farm will provide local jobs in an economy with an estimated 85% underemployment rate and offer skills based training to the older children served by Hope Ministries.

A video tour of the poultry farm as well as additional information on Spark Ventures can be found here: <http://www.sparkventures.org/media>. Spark Ventures CEO, Rich Johnson, and Spark Ventures’ Zambian Partner Director, Charles Mumba, can be made available for comment on request. Additionally, extensive b roll footage and photography from Rich Johnson’s recent visit to Zambia is also available.

#### ABOUT SPARK VENTURES

Spark Ventures is a Chicago-based international nonprofit that exists to form partnerships with high-impact organizations around the world so that vulnerable children achieve their potential. Spark achieves this by working with locally-led grassroots organizations in developing economies, building their capacity both in terms of human and financial capital and by helping them to achieve financial sustainability through the creation of a local income-generating business. Spark was founded in 2007 by three Chicago natives and currently partners with Hope Ministries in Zambia.

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