



# SOWHOPE Newsletter

*"Where there is despair, let me sow hope."* FRANCIS OF ASSISI

## ASPIRATIONS MET THRU LITERACY

**M**ayuri, of India, was raised along with six siblings in a home of old traditions. None of them had ever attended school and were illiterate. The result was a degree of poverty that only allowed each person one meal a day. Mayuri was only permitted to work in the house, and had to wear a burka whenever in public. Married at the age of 12, she became a mother at 15.

**H**er husband, a mechanic, made just enough money for the family. Their son, now 10, is in grade three. Mayuri was frustrated with the family's financial condition, and hoped that it could improve, but did not know what to do.



*Mayuri from India*

**W**hen a representative from one of SowHope's partners visited her house, Mayuri was motivated to attend the Adult Literacy Class nearby. When she explained to her husband that part of their poor financial situation was due to illiteracy, he reluctantly allowed her to attend.

**H**er confidence grew as she attended the classes and she was soon reading, writing, and doing simple arithmetic. Those lessons, plus additional information about the law, business,

health, etc, informed her about such things as her legal rights, family planning, cleanliness, and how to make and save money. In the Self Help Training Program, she learned to make detergent, shampoo, and other products, which she now sells at a profit.

**T**he extra money she makes allows her to send their son to an English school for a better education. Her husband, initially against her studying, is now happy for her. Mayuri is now making more money than her husband and is so thankful for SowHope's part in her education and new life.

## SOWHOPE DOCUMENTARY COMING!

SowHope is in the process of producing a film documentary about the daily lives of impoverished women around the world. The premier showing will be this Fall. More details coming soon!

Watch our recent Africa video at [www.sowhope.org](http://www.sowhope.org).  
New photos on facebook! [www.facebook.com/sowhope](http://www.facebook.com/sowhope)

## BANGLADESH REPORT

**S**owHope began funding microloans in Bangladesh in 2007. Since then, nearly 3000 women have joined 175 village groups. They attend weekly meetings where they pay back loans and receive valuable training in vital areas such as; leadership, finances, healthcare, sustainable gardening, vocational skills, relationships, and even disaster management. All their children are now required to attend school and some are going on to college.



*Napushi weaves baskets to wholesale, averaging a profit of \$2 per day.*

**M**any husbands and wives proudly work together now. Women report a greater sense of dignity, as their businesses succeed.



*Mary and Dulal stand in front of their fish farm.*

## MEET A BOARD MEMBER

While they were both studying for their Master's degree at Grand Valley State University, Sylvia Juta met SowHope CEO Mary Dailey Brown. Sylvia, from Zimbabwe, was hooked when she heard about the work of SowHope. She says, "I had worked with NGOs in Zimbabwe and one thing I thought could be done better was to include local leaders in their programs. SowHope's strategy of partnering with local leaders, using local solutions, to solve local problems is, to me, the best way to help less developed countries."



Sylvia Juta

Now a member of SowHope's board, Sylvia feels that one of her responsibilities as a board member is to be an ambassador of SowHope to anyone she meets. She believes that when people understand what SowHope does they will support SowHope in a variety of ways. "I'm always thinking about how I can advance the mission of the organization," she says.

Sylvia comes to the board table having had firsthand experience with poverty and gender inequality. As such, she brings a valuable perspective of how to best help SowHope clients. She also brings bicultural awareness, having experienced life in both the USA and Africa.

Presently teaching at Muskegon Community College, Sylvia will receive her PHD in Public Administration from Western Michigan University in August. She hopes to begin working for a nonprofit. What does she see in SowHope's future? In her words, "I see great potential for SowHope to help impoverished societies because SowHope aims at empowering women – the best way to bring prosperity to any community."

SOWHOPE  
EXISTS

TO INSPIRE  
WOMEN AROUND  
THE WORLD  
BY PROMOTING  
WELLNESS,  
EDUCATION, AND  
ECONOMIC  
OPPORTUNITIES

## DATE NIGHT-SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISER

Vikki Lambeth, of Abu Dhabi, was invited by her pastor to hear a woman speaking about her non-profit organization, to determine if the women's group Vikki was part of leading might wish to support it. She says, "After listening to Mary speak for about 45 minutes, SowHope's story, mission, and goals enraptured the entire leadership team. The question became not whether we would support it, but how soon can we start?"



Vikki &amp; Troy Lambeth

The entire group felt that SowHope differentiated itself through its specific message of empowering women. The focus on identifying and developing leadership from women's microloan groups was inspiring. The SowHope goals of teaching women how to support their families, offering health and educational opportunities fit the values and goals of Vikki's women's group.

As a team, they turned their annual Girl's Night Out into a Date Night, to have a wider audience. They knew that if more people, including husbands, heard the same powerful message they had heard, they would also be moved to support SowHope. The event was so successful that they are planning Date Night as an annual event in support of SowHope.

Vikki encourages us all to think of ways to support SowHope. In her words, "Don't be limited by conventional forms of fundraising. If you are an athlete, compete for SowHope and raise money. Have a charity dinner party at your house. Hold a garage sale, with all proceeds going to SowHope." Vikki feels that one of the strongest things any of us can do is to spread the word. She urges, "Focus on simply getting the message of SowHope out there. Once people hear about it they are inspired and want to support it."

## Cont. from page 1: Bangladesh Story

**Below:** Parvin has taken multiple loans to buy 4 sewing machines and now employs 3 other women.

**Right:** Women from different microloan groups are selected for special trainings, so they can teach others.



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Ruth Posthumus - Chairperson  
David Kelson - Vice Chairperson

Alfred Longtin - Treasurer  
Melissa Miller - Secretary

Richard Butler

Sylvia Juta

Beth Leeson