



SowHOPE Newsletter

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

Hope For Peace in D. R. of Congo

Four tribes near Litho, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have a terrible history of war with each other, resulting in many deaths and atrocities in the region. Women's groups from the four tribes formed a coalition, and decided to do something to bring peace and life to this devastated area.

The four tribes came together under the leadership of a husband-wife couple, both nurses, to build a maternity clinic that is accessible to all four tribes. The women's coalition donated all the money for the building materials. Over 180 volunteers built the simple four room maternity clinic. The women have called it their peacemaking tool. Made with their own hands, this mud hut features a corrugated metal roof and a patient observation area. Sparsley equipped with blankets and straw mattresses, the building has no water or medical equipment.



Dr. Pam Ogor, SowHope board member, meets with local medical leaders in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In this part of Africa rape has commonly been used as a weapon of war, often resulting in AIDS and pregnancy. Raped women are often shunned by their husbands and left to fend for themselves. The clinic, averaging 35 births a month, with no lab available – only basic wound care - has provided women with care and hope. The desire of the women's coalition is to provide better conditions in which to bear children and offer healthcare advice and emotional counseling.

They need delivery tables and solar panels for lighting, the ability to dig a well for a water source, more beds, mattresses, sheets and blankets, plus a baby scale and bassinets. Simple medical equipment such as bedpans, a sterilizer, and a water filter would make a profound change in this center.

It is difficult to describe the depth of deprivation and poverty that has been experienced by these women. Their children are also their hope. For them to be able to give birth in a clean place with support from other women will offer them both physical, psychological, and emotional support – a day of new beginnings for them, as well as their newborns.

For just \$2000, SowHope will be able to assist these motivated and well-organized local leaders to accomplish their dream of bringing maternal healthcare to this war-torn community.

Micro-loans Result in Empowerment



Bangladesh Microloan club weekly meeting - making payments.

This past October, SowHope completed a micro-loan project in Bangladesh. 3,130 women received loans through this project. Some women used the funds to buy chickens, goats or cows to support their small farm, selling eggs, milk and cheese. Others began businesses such as rickshaw rentals, tailoring, candle-making, or knitting and sold the product or service. Combined with the financial opportunity were weekly trainings that supported the women as they learned about nutrition, small business practices, and social and legal rights. The fact that they are in groups where they can offer social and emotional support to one another, is another reason that micro-loan projects are so successful.

Women in the developing world pay back their loans at a rate of 98% - an amazing response! In Bangladesh, where women generally have few rights, low literacy rates, and little education, micro-loans are proven to be life-changing to the women and to their families as their businesses grow, their knowledge increases, and they become more financially stable. Often, they are so successful that they are able to hire others in their village, thus serving as strong members of the community as well. Thanks for your part in changing the lives of over 3,000 families!



Microloan recipient and successful fish farmer shows her pond.

Meet a SowHope Board Member

It was a simple conversation with old friends, Doug and Mary Dailey Brown, that led to Dr. Diana Sharp's involvement in SowHope as Chairperson of the SowHope board. Although she must travel to board meetings from the Chicago suburb where she and her husband live, Diana is committed to the goals of the organization. What would compel someone to become involved in a group so far from home?

That night, a few years ago, as Mary shared the vision of SowHope with the Sharps, Diana could see what the organization could become with a strong leader like Mary at the helm, joined by competent volunteers and a board committed to guide it. Diana believes in SowHope's success – resulting from its outcomes-based program that visits the people in the funded programs, insuring that both the organization and the recipients are headed toward the same goals.

Diana feels the responsibility of the board is to assure that SowHope remains steadfast to its vision, and to be certain that funds are spent appropriately. The board provides oversight to the work that Mary Brown does, acting as mentor, guide, and counsel. As the chairperson, Diana guides the board discussions and leads them through the business of the board. She shared that the board is made up of committed, passionate and experienced people, and that board meetings are lively and full of discussion. Diana fully enjoys working with the board and says that she learns something new whenever they meet.



Dr. Diana Sharp-Board Chair

As an associate vice president at an Illinois college, Diana brings unique talents to the board. Strategic planning, budgets, and professional development are just a portion of what she deals with daily. Her expertise has allowed her to work with many creative people, and she delights in bringing people together for a common goal.

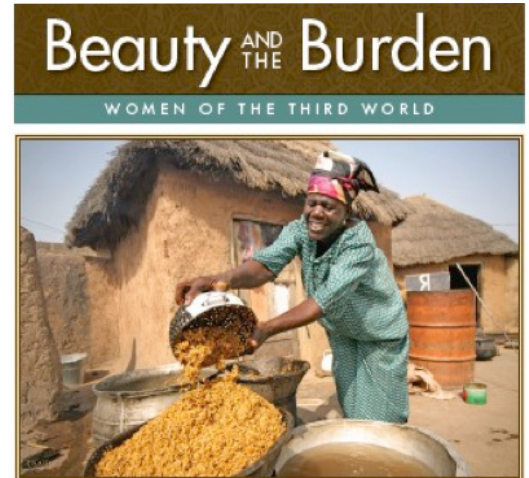
Diana states that much has been accomplished by SowHope, and she sees the organization as poised to grow, doing more outreach at home so more people know SowHope, its work, and realize what could be done with their help. She sees the goal as growth, growing more friends so SowHope can fund more projects and help more women.

MISSION STATEMENT

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

Photo Exhibit - April 17, 2010 - 7PM

The Third Annual Photo Exhibit, Fundraiser will be held Saturday, April 17th, 7PM at the B.O.B., 20 Monroe Ave, Grand Rapids.



This gala event offers you an evening of art, live music and inspiration to benefit the needs of the world's poorest women. Surrounded by professional photos, you will see the beauty of Third World women and the burden they bear. The stylish and contemporary EVE Room, coupled with the delicious food (heavy hor d'oeuvres) that will be prepared by the highly acclaimed Gilmore Collection, will make for a very enjoyable and memorable night.

SowHope has **impacted the lives of more than 10,000** women in six countries by providing them with basic health, education and economic opportunities. The difficult issues surrounding women in the Third World seem enormous and overwhelming – but not hopeless. Through our partnerships with capable and compassionate local leaders in the Third World and your gifts, SowHope is making significant changes in lives of despairing women. Many of the photos demonstrate the changes that have taken place. We hope to see you there!

For more information, to RSVP, or order tickets please visit our website, www.sowhope.org or call (616) 433-1575.

HOSTED EVENTS

Please consider hosting an event to let your friends know about SowHope. A Hosted Event can be a breakfast, brunch, lunch, tea, dinner, or evening dessert. You provide the place, food, and guests. SowHope will provide a compelling presentation of our work with women around the world. Contact Trish@sowhope.org for more information.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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Doreen Mangrum - Vice Chairperson

David Crawford - Treasurer
Bonnie Conley - Secretary

Chandra Colley
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