



# SowHOPE Newsletter

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

## LOCAL LEADERS-SETS SOWHOPE APART

One of the unique features of SowHope is the strategy of partnering with local leaders who truly understand local culture. They use local solutions to solve local problems. The importance of this principle became very clear when SowHope wanted to begin a microloan project in Bangladesh. Working with Bangladesh native Nelson S., Director of Microfinance for a non-government organization (NGO), the following cautionary story is avoided in microfinance.

Well-meaning Westerners who, knowing that women were far more responsible about repaying microloans, offered them only to women. The husbands caught on, forced their wives to borrow the money, and then demanded the cash, spending it poorly. Since only women could sign the microloans, they were the ones legally responsible and suffered the punishments that resulted when the loans defaulted.

Nelson's NGO, seeking to protect women, will only offer loans to women whose husbands co-sign their loans. They also require husbands to co-sign their property to their wives. The NGO explains that they do not want to lose their investment if something should happen to the husband and the home-based business becomes vulnerable to male relative heirs. Women are far better at utilizing microloans to build businesses, pay back loans, and increase profits, especially when their husbands are supportive of the loans. This system has proven to be culturally adept and everyone benefits - the women, their families, and the entire community.

SowHope, in partnership with this local leader using local solutions to solve local problems, has offered \$60,000 in microloans to over 4,300 women. SowHope is now raising \$70,000 for another project targeting over 5,000 women in new areas.



Founding SowHope board member, Bonnie Conley, greeting women from a Bangladesh microloan club, as Nelson (on left) looks on

## LIFE IMPROVING IN KENYA

Josephine K., a local leader in Kenya, continues to lead the way to better living in her community. Sensing a huge need for medical care for AIDS widows, she and others in her community have built a medical clinic with their own hands. This cement block, tin-roofed building will serve the widows, diagnose which women need to be taken to a local hospital, offer psychological counseling to abused women, and present information on basic health, including AIDS prevention.

Josephine's outreach is to vulnerable women and girls who are impoverished and marginalized. In her words, she will "use any opportunity to contribute ideas for development whenever and wherever possible, helping women to feel they are people of value."



Medical Clinic under construction in Kenya, funded by SowHope

How does SowHope find people like Josephine? SowHope meets these individuals through word of mouth or by encountering them through travel. Mary Dailey Brown, CEO of SowHope, says, "The leaders already have a reputation for successfully helping women – that's how we hear about them!" Getting behind such accomplishments with financial support means the continuation of such achievement.

In a previous newsletter we wrote about how Josephine had a dream to have a grain grinding mill. This helped 60 women who have the misfortune of being known as "Aids widows." These are women that have been identified as having Aids (often contracted from their husbands or through rape) and who are therefore expelled from their homes to fend for themselves. With people like Josephine who come to their rescue, life is much more hopeful.

## RUNNER RACES FOR WOMEN

Recently, as Allyson Putt signed up to run in a 10K race, she decided to see if she could turn it into an opportunity to help others. Choosing SowHope as the recipient of a fund-raiser, she was amazed at the positive response.

First, she created a simple flyer, explaining the vision of SowHope, outlining the process of giving so much per kilometer, and asking for checks to be made out directly to the organization. Then she e-mailed the flyer to family and friends, and also added it to her Facebook account.

Why SowHope? In her own words, "I like everything about SowHope. Not only is it an organization that strives to help women, but it does so with local groups and encourages community involvement." She was hoping that the funds raised would be added to SowHope's project in Bangladesh.

Allyson raised \$750. She had never done anything like this before, and learned a lot. She says, "I was blown away by the generosity of the people around me. One of my professors donated more than he had promised initially...and getting that surprise was fantastic."



Allyson Putt

Allyson's willingness to organize the details and to be a voice explaining the mission of SowHope resulted in promoting awareness of the plight of impoverished women around the world to a wider audience while also contributing funds to projects which will inspire these women.



Allyson running for SowHope

### WAYS TO BE INVOLVED WITH SOWHOPE

- Invite SowHope to speak to your community or social club, school, workplace, house of worship, or women's group, etc.
- Host a fundraising event in your home to inform your friends and family about the important work of SowHope.
- Include SowHope in your company's matching gift program.
- Encourage your friends/family to "like" us on facebook.

### SOWHOPE EXISTS

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

## KIDS ART AUCTION RAISES \$1,000



Artist Joel Tanis with first grade class at Potter's House School.

At Potter's House school in Grand Rapids, MI, first-grade teacher Beth Vander Kolk's students learn economic concepts. Topics begin with the concept of scarcity, then understanding the need to choose, including how to prioritize, how to recognize the difference between a want and a need, and how to use talents to help you survive.

For example, how does an artist survive? Local artist Joel Tanis visited the class in this urban Christian school to explain to them how he supports himself and gives beauty and joy to his community through his art. He also gave them art lessons.

The students quickly realized that they were creating things that could be used in trade for things they wanted or needed. Their conversations about the economy helped them understand that there were areas of the world where people had less to trade for what they needed – and the students wanted to help those people become more independent economically.

Beth had been introduced to SowHope and was very moved by the vision to equip women to generate income for themselves and their families. As she shared some of the stories with her students, they decided to have an art auction and to donate funds from the auction to SowHope. As a class, they put together a collection of their art pieces and invited their Potter's House School community to attend. They let people know that the incentive for the auction was their awareness of some people struggling to meet needs – and that the students wanted to use their resources to generate funds that others could use to trade for what they needed. They decided that since babies were the most helpless people, they wanted to support the needs of a birthing center in Africa.

The response was wonderful! The students were able to give \$1,000 toward the birthing center. These young students from Potter's House learned far more than art or economic concepts – they learned that they have talents that can be used to inspire others – especially those who are among the most helpless.



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