



# SowHOPE Newsletter

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

## NEW LIFE IN AFRICA

Recently, SowHope evaluated 12 ongoing projects in three African nations through field visits. SowHope has invested \$20,000 over a period of three years to inspire women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). One of the projects is a birthing center in the DRC.

Congolese women have in the past often given birth alone and in unsanitary conditions. On average, the area now being served by the clinic was losing 30 to 40 women per year during childbirth! During the past two years, with the new clinic, that number was reduced to one woman. Over 1600 babies were safely born at the new clinic. The center averaged about 2.5 births a day. In addition, 113 women with birth complications were able to get to a hospital via motorcycle, and over half of them had their child delivered via Caesarean section, saving their lives and that of their children.

The center is cared for by a married couple who are both nurses. They collaborate with Monique, a local leader, who originally inspired four warring tribes to come together to build the center, so not only has the center brought life to the area, but peace as well.



*Mother with newborn*

## NOW WE HAVE HOPE

A SowHope supported microloan group was started by a local leader, Josephine, in Kenya. The group is made up of single



*Group from Kenya with new hope*

## NOW WE HAVE HOPE (continued)

women who meet weekly to participate in a revolving credit project. One of the highlights the group experiences by meeting regularly together is profound encouragement. Single women in Kenya are often marginalized and stigmatized, because a woman's value is largely measured by the connection to her husband. A woman who is diseased, wounded, or widowed is often abandoned and left to fend for herself and her children. This group has reestablished a sense of worth and dignity in the women. They feel as if they are part of a loving family as they relate to and encourage each other. In the words of Jane, "Before this group, we had no hope. With this group, we have hope."

## WHAT WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD ARE SAYING ABOUT SOWHOPE

**Renestine W** (Birthing Center, DRC): "All three of my children were delivered via C-section. My life was saved by this action. I have never seen such generosity in my life."



**Sarah M** (Local Leader, Nigeria): One woman came to me saying, "I never knew how to read or write or to speak with confidence until Sarah taught us reading and writing and sewing. Now I can speak, make some money, and feed my family from my hand work."

**Speranza** (Local Leader, Uganda): In reference to Dina who has



*Speranza and Dina*

begun her own business with microloan funds: "Life is good. With the loan, she can get interest to use for school fees. Her husband now pays half of the fees, but in addition to the half she pays, she buys school clothes and supplies."

**Beatrice M** (Literacy Student, DRC): "I love the classes to death. Parents here send boys to school and not girls, so I am motivated to stay in class."



## MEET THE NEW VOICE AT SOWHOPE

**J**ennifer Boyd is answering the phone, bookkeeping, filing, scheduling appointments, managing volunteers, and much more in her new part-time administrative position in the office of SowHope. Jenny, who holds a Master's Degree in Management from Aquinas College, has owned and operated her own business, a dance studio, for the past 10 years. Before that, she worked as a branch manager for local banks, and she also worked for a local non-profit foundation. Desirous of a part-time position so she could have more time with her three children, Jenny joined SowHope at the beginning of 2012.



Jennifer Boyd

Photo by: Annie Kendra

**I**t was her husband who was looking for a job and spotted the posting and suggested it might be something she would enjoy.

**L**ooking back over the past few months of work at SowHope, Jenny has been impressed by several things. "SowHope is humbling," she says. "I am continually amazed by the grassroots nature of this organization. It is the little things that touch me the most. Entering hand written receipts from our partners in the Congo and knowing what an amazing impact such a small amount of money can have in their lives. They are blessed that Sowhope is doing this work."

**S**o whether you are calling to volunteer, stopping in to help stuff envelopes, or simply asking for facts about the organization, the person who responds to you may be Jenny. Her cheerful demeanor will make you feel right at home.

### SOWHOPE EXISTS

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

## MICROLOAN SUCCESS IN BANGLADESH

**S**hova Rani Majumdar lives in Bakhar village. She used to fight poverty along with her family, often without food. There was no permanent source of income in the family. Although her husband could do crafts, he did not have good business skills, and so they could not afford to buy school supplies for their children, such as school bags and pencils.



Shova now has a basket business.

**T**hen Shova heard about a micro-loan program, and she gathered five others to create a micro-loan group in 2009. The group now numbers 18. Shova has used the loans to purchase grass to make mats, rice cleaner so she can sell rice, and she has also purchased baskets which she sells at a higher rate than her price.

**W**ith her profit, her family now eats well, the children are being educated, and she has invested in a production crop. With her support, her oldest son has graduated. As a woman, this is a great accomplishment for her.

**I**n the village of Alta, Gouri Rani took quite a different direction. She organized several women to create a micro-loan group. Her husband is a carpenter, and so Gouri wanted to help him start a furniture business. Now she and her husband are making furniture and selling the pieces in the marketplace and at fairs. She has so successfully handled their business that she was able to build a one room brick house. Both of her children are in school, and her hope for them is that her daughter would become a nurse and her son a banker.



Gouri and her husband make furniture to sell.

## TWO PHOTO EXHIBITS WELL ATTENDED

**I**n both Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Washington, D.C., people gathered to hear how the vision of SowHope is changing the lives of women who make less than \$2 a day. Many who were unfamiliar with SowHope heard about projects while surrounded by beautiful, professional photos and paintings of women from the developing world. Approximately 275 turned out for these annual fundraising events, raising more than \$40,000! Once again, the Photo Exhibits have helped to spread the word about the organization while supporting it financially. Women in many countries will have their lives positively affected as a result.

## DIGITAL CAMERA?

**O**ur SowHope partners and local leaders would love to picture the changes that SowHope has made in the lives of those they are supporting. If you have a digital camera that you are not using, please know that it would be prized by them and well used. Please contact the office for drop-off information.

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