



SowHOPE Newsletter

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

MICROFINANCE AS PEACE-KEEPING



Kenya Microfinance Group

On SowHope's most recent visit to Africa, Mary Dailey Brown and Dr. Pam Ogor met with longtime Kenyan partner, Josephine. As they visited four villages and women's groups supported by SowHope, the story told of results in one of the groups is really amazing.

In 2008, there were multiple clashes between tribes, resulting in many people being killed, houses burned, and cattle stolen. Shortly after the clashes, SowHope funded projects submitted by Josephine to form support groups for the widows of men who died – their husbands had been killed by a neighboring tribe.

Last year, SowHope sponsored Community Development/Microfinance conferences which were organized and led by Josephine. Josephine explained that she had intentionally invited women (and a few men, as this was culturally appropriate) from the enemy tribe to attend the conference along with the widow's groups. People from each tribe attended the microfinance training together! Josephine utilizes the very desirable training to attract people from warring tribes and then she has them room together and share meals for the five days during the trainings.

On the second day of training, the widows cried out that one of the men attending was a leader of the raiders that had destroyed their lives. Josephine told them that they must forgive him if they wanted to heal and to go forward in finding prosperity in their lives. They all agreed to do so and the man was very remorseful as he realized they were forgiving him for atrocities that included murdering some of their husbands. The women were adamant that they were serious about doing whatever it took to move on in a healthy way in their lives.

They are completely changed from the first time SowHope visited them, which was not long after the clashes. They were living in despair. Now, they are a great support to each other and are growing economically with their own microfinance club. One woman, Naomi, said, "We are so rich now. All of us have at least 2 cows and another small business. We are now saving to give money to women poorer than us!"

Another lady worked very hard to grow her small store/hotel business using money from the microfinance project. She was able to tell her brother-in-law to leave when he showed



up after her husband died. He was there to take over all of her worldly possessions and demonstrated his right to do so by being the first male to hang his coat in her house, which is the common practice when a man dies. With the support of her microfinance group, she bravely told him to leave and to take his coat with him. To everyone's surprise, he did just that. She is carrying on with her own profitable business. The culture is slowly changing and women say that more and more they are being considered with respect.

All of this is evidence that SowHope sponsored projects do more than simply provide funds; they provide well-being, respect, self-assurance, and peace!

YOU'RE INVITED - SAVE THE DATE!

Our 1st Annual Fundraiser Dinner will be held on **Tuesday, October 6th**, at *Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park*, Grand Rapids, Michigan. More details coming soon. Interested in being a table sponsor? Contact us at info@sowhope.org or call 616.433.1575.

VOLUNTEER - JESSICA SWANBERG

Jessica Swanberg has volunteered as the leader of the Human Resource team for SowHope since its earliest days. The HR team serves the personnel needs of all the workers at SowHope, both employed and volunteer. She has made certain that all required worker policies are compliant with the law. Jessica also put together an employment manual and she directs and organizes an annual event - the all-day Board Retreat & Training Day. Hiring issues, policies, and anything pertaining to HR/personnel at SowHope have all been deftly handled under the auspices of this delightful woman.



Why would a young mother take the responsibility for such a large and time-consuming job – for no pay? Jessica was planning a mission trip to Peru when friends invited her to the first Photo Exhibit and she learned about SowHope. She quickly saw the deep focus on women and children, and Jessica's passion to help under-served people recover from a broken community led to her involvement. She also recognized strong leadership ability in Mary Dailey Brown, the CEO of SowHope, and has faith that the efforts of SowHope will continue to succeed.

During her many years of committed service, Jessica has seen the effect of SowHope in the lives of over 50,000 women who have been directly impacted in very positive ways, and she is certain that number will continue to increase. Thanks to her professional skills and steady leadership, the SowHope HR/Personnel Team always seeks to implement best practices. Jessica's dedication has helped SowHope to function as a well-run enterprise.

2014 ANNUAL REPORT

SowHope exists to inspire impoverished women in the developing world by promoting wellness, education, and economic opportunities.

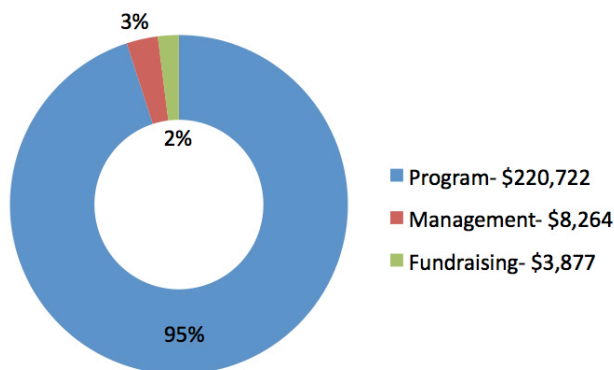
Here are some of the highlights of 2014, our 9th year of existence:

- SowHope's income for the year 2014 was \$270,605, which is our highest year to date.
- During 2014 SowHope funded 21 projects in 8 countries which impacted 4,449 women.
- SowHope exceeded the milestone of 50,000 total women directly impacted by projects we funded.

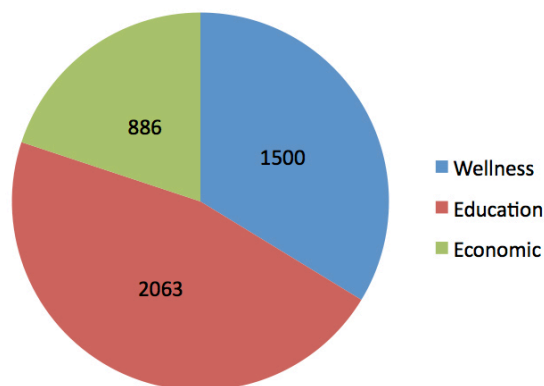
Thank you for your support as we reach out to empower women who care for their children, communities, and nations. When you support SowHope, you are changing the world!

<u>Country</u>	<u># of Projects</u>	<u>Beneficiaries</u>
Bangladesh	1	1
DR Congo	7	1400
India	3	369
Kenya	2	316
Nigeria	3	1494
Pakistani	1	200
S. Sudan	2	68
Uganda	2	601
Total	21	4,449

2014 Operating Expenses



4,449 Women Impacted by Projects in 2014



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