



We sow hope... and hope is growing!
NEWSLETTER



Babati (far left) and others raise their hands: "I am part of the group."

BANGLADESH COOPERATIVE

A few years ago, a SowHope team led by CEO Mary Dailey Brown was verifying a microfinance project in Bangladesh and was invited to visit a rural school. The teacher at this school, Babati, was very inspired as Mary talked about SowHope's work with women around the world. So Babati, still actively teaching, went on to start and lead a women's empowerment group in her village.

Babati's group began with each woman saving 63 cents per month to fund the group bank. They have saved \$50 collectively to loan to each other for entrepreneurial endeavors. This group of women also facilitates tailoring trainings to provide a vocation for local women and girls.

The group has taken to activism and protecting human rights, such as firmly standing against child marriages. If anyone in the cooperative becomes aware that a girl is about to be married, the entire group stands outside the girl's house to confront the family. The women implore the family to follow the law and not allow their daughter to be married. Marriage under the age of 18 is illegal in Bangladesh, but the country still has the second highest rate of child marriages in the world.



A woman working in the tea gardens.

In a recent visit, the group was asked what they would do next if they had more resources. They expressed a strong desire to help poor women working for \$1 a day in the nearby tea gardens. They want to mentor the tea garden women to start their own cooperative.

IT STARTS WITH ONE

Change within a community starts with just one woman like Babati or Catherine. You can fund microloans by donating \$30 per woman!

Visit www.sowhope.org/donate today.

SOWHOPE EXISTS

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



A baby is delivered by midwife Catherine during the dedication ceremony.

QUALITY MATERNAL HEALTHCARE

We have seen many great successes in Uganda across all of SowHope's program areas: wellness, education, and economic opportunities. Catherine is one woman who was extremely successful with several different small businesses. She learned midwifery from her grandmother and used one of her microloans to build a birthing room next to her house. She is the only maternal caregiver within several miles, and most women must travel on foot. Catherine's delivery room has been busy - she delivers three to five babies per week!

As the village grew, Catherine recognized a need for a bigger and better birthing center. She donated a plot of land adjacent to the village's main road and requested SowHope's assistance with construction of the building and furnishing with the necessary medical equipment.

A dedication ceremony for the completed clinic was held during a SowHope team visit. While the crowd celebrated with songs, speeches, and ribbon cutting, Catherine was called away to tend to a mother in a field. Later, the tour of the facility was interrupted by a commotion at the door. To everyone's surprise Catherine entered with a healthy newborn baby and a proud mother following.

The Ugandan government has now fixed the road to the clinic. However, the government is also requiring a certified professional to run the clinic. Catherine has not had the opportunity to earn the proper certification, but she has always invested in her daughter Grace's education. Grace will soon be completing her nurse's training with plans to manage the clinic. Until then the village women's group will hire a credentialed midwife to run the clinic. Project facilitators Isaac and Sepiranza will continue to assist in ensuring that the clinic functions sustainably and contributes to the area's ongoing development.



The completed maternity clinic.

TWO MILLIONTH DOLLAR DONORS

Aimy and John Ross have been longtime donors of SowHope. Over the past few years they have begun to increase their giving to SowHope. After attending the 2016 "We Sow Hope" Dinner, they made a donation that brought SowHope's all-time donations to just over \$2 million.

The Ross family has made a creative model for their donations. Aimy is a Shaklee distributor and donates 100% of her profits from this venture to SowHope. She has also now made arrangements for SowHope to become a certified nonprofit online Shaklee distributor, meaning that 40% of all revenues from this channel will also be donated. Aimy urges anyone who wants to find a creative way to support SowHope to consider doing your shopping through the SowHope website (www.sowhope.org/donate).



Aimy and John Ross

Why choose SowHope for their charitable giving? The Ross family says "It's a wise investment." They see that women receiving microloans repay their loans faithfully and build microenterprises. Aimy feels deeply connected to SowHope's passion for giving women the chance to make improvements in their own lives and in their communities. The Rosses cannot imagine passing up the opportunity to play a part in this great task.

Favorite thing about SowHope? Aimy enjoys listening to Mary tell travel stories after visiting project leaders and beneficiaries overseas. She's inspired by hearing of both the plight of women as well as their success stories. "We laugh, we cry, and it's wonderful to let these women know that we care," says Aimy. She jokes that she donates to earn a better chance at an audience with Mary. But jokes aside, she cannot wait for the day that she can be the \$10,000,000th donor and is grateful to be able to continue supporting SowHope.

YOU'RE INVITED - SAVE THE DATES!

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Wednesday, March 8 - see adjacent article

HONOR A WOMAN BRUNCH

Sunday, May 7, 11am - 1pm
at JW Marriott in Grand Rapids, MI

"WE SOW HOPE" DINNER

Thursday, September 28, 6:30pm
at Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park
Be an event sponsor or table sponsor

RSVP & more info at www.sowhope.org/events
or mail to P.O. Box 234, Rockford, MI 49341

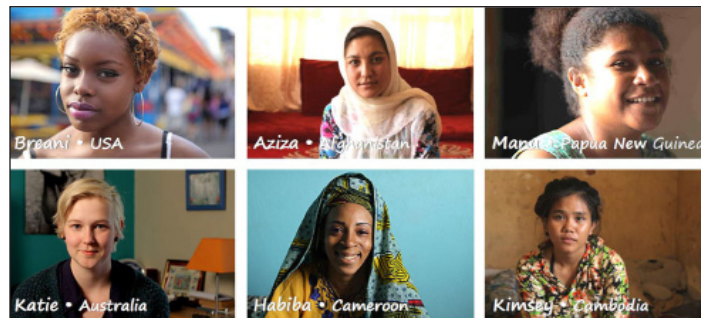
MARCH 8th: INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Every year we are pleased to celebrate International Women's Day as the single holiday that aligns most with our mission. This holiday has been celebrated across the world for over a century as a time to recognize and give tribute to the many achievements of women. It's also a time for the international community to focus on gender equality. The global theme this year is "Be Bold For Change," urging participants to call on the masses or on themselves to help forge a better working world - a more gender inclusive world.

There are many ways that you can participate, whether you live near our headquarters or not. If you are a social media guru, you can acknowledge this holiday in your posts using the hashtags: #IWD2017 and #BeBoldForChange. You can donate to organizations that help women and fight for equality. And you can participate in local activities near you (or start your own event!).

This year SowHope is hosting a collaborative event in our headquarters region in partnership with other local organizations. Partners include: Dining for Women Grand Rapids chapter, Be A Rose, a girls' group from Covenant House Academy, Aquinas College's Jane Hibbard Idema Women's Studies Center, Grand Valley State University's Hauenstein Leadership Center, and additional marketing in the community from the Grand Rapids Film Society.

We will be screening *I Am a Girl*, a feature-length documentary from Australian director/producer Rebecca Barry, on March 8th. The film presents the coming-of-age stories of six girls who each live in a different country and socioeconomic context.



"I Am a Girl" features six young women from countries around the world.

The screening will be held on Wednesday, March 8th at Celebration Cinema North, 2121 Celebration Dr NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525. The film will begin at 6:30pm, followed by a panel-led Q&A session to discuss issues that concern women and girls around the world. Tickets cost \$11*, and the limited quantity available can only be purchased online at www.gathr.us/screening/19119.

**Please note that neither SowHope nor any of the partner organizations receive any portion of the ticket proceeds, but there will be an opportunity to donate at the event.*

Follow SowHope
on social media:



BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Lizbeth Leeson - Chairperson
TBD - Vice Chairperson

Alfred Longtim - Treasurer
Ndeye R. Ndao - Secretary

Aaron Hoxworth
Diane Joppie

Katie Kirouac
Judy Kruger

Genevieve Sabala