



We sow hope... and hope is growing!

NEWSLETTER

NEW LIFE WITH FISTULA REPAIR



Dr. Intengre & His Family

the aid of a midwife or doctor and about 2 million women live with fistulas today. (In developed nations, this condition is prevented by conducting cesarean sections or is treated with surgery immediately after the birth. In the U.S., there has not been a case of untreated fistula since 1927.) The condition is devastating and many times the woman becomes a social outcast due to the smell of leaking urine and feces. The injury leaves the woman alone and in physical, emotional, and economic need.

A SowHope team recently visited Dr. Intengre, a surgeon specializing in fistula repair. He has been working at a fistula hospital in Niger for six years and recently decided to go back to his home in Burkina Faso to do fistula repairs there, hoping to open a fistula hospital very near to the capital city. For now, he has been renting a local operating room at the Dr. Larry Ebert Medical Center to do repairs, when it is available. SowHope is keen to do more for women with fistulas. Dr. Intengre told us a story of one woman who was helped by our new partnership.

Sarata* was married at 16 and became pregnant. She delivered at home with no medical assistance, resulting in a fistula and the stillbirth of her baby. Because of the constant smell of urine, her husband divorced her. She lived the life of a social outcast for 9 years with no way to make money. With funding from SowHope, Dr. Intengre was able to do her fistula surgery. When she was released from the hospital two weeks later, all issues related to her fistula had been remedied. She then began a one-month stay at a facility that helps women by providing emotional support and teaching income-generating skills. At her 6-week follow-up appointment, she reported to Dr. Intengre with a big smile, "I am really thankful for your help. Now I can go back to my village and live a normal life. I have learned some skills that will help me make money. I am still young (at 25), so I hope I can find a new husband and begin a family."

Your support continues to inspire women like Sarata every day.

Impoverished women suffer from many things that we have never imagined. One of them is obstetric fistula. A fistula occurs most often in young women during a long delivery with no medical intervention. The baby is frequently stillborn and the mother left with chronic incontinence. In developing countries, over 40% of women give birth without

SOWHOPE EXISTS

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

OVERCOMING DOMESTIC ABUSE

During a visit to one of SowHope's funded partners in South Asia who runs a Transitional Care Center (TCC) for trafficked and abused girls, women, and their children, one mother tearfully described what her life had been like.

Elham* was regularly beaten and sexually abused by her husband. She said that she could withstand the mistreatment, but when her husband began to abuse her 14-year old daughter, she became desperate to escape from him. Typically, this is very risky and would be nearly impossible to do.



Elham Sewing Clothes

Elham went to the local police for help, but they told her that she was the problem and sent her back home. With great determination and the help of a brave neighbor, she made her way to the city to find help for herself, her daughter, and her young son.

Eventually, Elham and her children arrived at our partner's TCC that gave them a safe place to hide and live for 3 years. "For the first time in our lives, we lived in a calm environment free of fear and nightmares", Elham said. Because the husband was a powerful man with many connections, they could never risk leaving the shelter. During that time, the shelter provided food, clothing, medical care, and counseling. Elham attended literacy classes and learned how to read and write. She also earned a small income by sewing clothes. The children continued their education at the shelter. Finally, with financial support from SowHope, our partner was able to secure the necessary paperwork, make travel arrangements, and find appropriate housing and a support network to reintegrate the family to another country.

Since finding her "second life", Elham says, "We are so happy that I cannot begin to explain our happiness!" Her son said, "Now I can live without fear. I can go to school and even join a football team!"

With your help and the support of our partners, Elham and her family can live in freedom.

MONTHLY DONOR APPRECIATION DINNER

On April 12th at 6:00pm, get your grub on! All monthly donors are invited to the SowHope Headquarters, 3777 Sparks Dr SE, Grand Rapids, MI. We are serving up gourmet grilled cheese sandwiches and soup! RSVP online or email info@sowhope.org for more info.

*Name changed for privacy

KIMBERLY GILL, BOARD MEMBER & ARTIST



The first time she was introduced to SowHope, Kimberly Gill, a member of the SowHope Board of Directors since 2017, was inspired. "The beauty and emotion captured in Mary's photography and the stories she shared of these women's lives..." Kim says, "I knew it was an organization I wanted to get involved in." Kim approached Mary Dailey Brown, SowHope's President/CEO, and asked if she and another artist could paint in their own style the

women Mary photographed. Kim began promoting SowHope through her artwork, entering paintings in juried competitions and displaying them in group exhibitions locally and nationally, including ArtPrize.

Kim became an artist after an art therapy session changed her life. "I had a tragedy occur in my life", she says, "Not only was the art therapy experience healing...it set me on a course to become an independent fine artist." Today, she is represented in two galleries in Michigan, Mullaly's Studio 128 in Elk Rapids and Flat River Gallery and Framing in Lowell. She is also a member of the International Society of Experimental Artists. Her passion is painting portraits with an emphasis on women and children in developing countries. Seemingly a perfect fit, Kim became involved with SowHope because "SowHope understands that improving the lives of women also improves the lives of their families, their communities, and ultimately the world. It creates a ripple effect."

Kim Gill now sits on the Board as well as the Program and Marketing Teams. Of the three program areas that SowHope focuses on, she is most passionate about education. "Education is instrumental to improving wellness and economic circumstances... it inspires confidence, value, and purpose", Kim explains, "I feel there needs to be a stronger focus on educating women."

Based on her own experiences, Kim has a message for any young woman, "Honor yourself, your dreams, and your gifts by setting your goals high; keep moving toward them...above all, acknowledge your own unique magnificence and the power you possess to make a difference in our world." She adds, "We all possess creative gifts...whether it's painting, gardening, sculpting, writing, cooking, dancing...discover your own creative passion and delve into it...it's therapeutic, it's beautiful, and it can open up a whole new world for you."



"Determined", Painting by Kimberly Gill

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, MARCH 8TH

In celebration of International Women's Day 2019, SowHope will host two events. First, a light reception and guided tour of the International Photography by Local Photographers photo gallery will take place on March 8th, from 12:30-1:00pm at 3777 Sparks Dr SE, Grand Rapids, MI. The gallery is open from 9:00am-4:30pm.

In the evening, SowHope is hosting a screening of the critically acclaimed documentary *Girl Rising* at Celebration! Cinema North in Grand Rapids, MI. The screening will be held on Friday, March 8th at 7:00pm. A panel-led discussion will follow the screening. This is a great opportunity to support SowHope and introduce family and friends to the organization!

Girl Rising spotlights the unforgettable stories of girls and young women living in the developing world, striving beyond circumstance, and overcoming nearly insurmountable odds to achieve their dreams.

Tickets are \$10 each and are limited. They are selling fast, so reserve your seat today! **Please note: You must buy tickets online in advance.** Please plan to arrive at the theater early to check-in, buy concessions, and find the theater. SowHope will be providing reduced-priced popcorn/drink combo coupons for purchase before the film (\$4 for small, \$5.50 for medium). You will be able to purchase your concessions after checking in. Check out the event page on our website for more information and to buy tickets to the IWD Screening of *Girl Rising* at Celebration! Cinema North: www.sowhope.org/international-womens-day.

Or scan the QR Code below for the same information:



A BIG Thank You to Dr. Pam Wirth & Rockford Self Storage for sponsoring our event!

SAVE THE DATE!

SowHope's 5th Annual Fundraising Gala

Thursday, September 26, 2019, 6:30PM

Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

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on social media:



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