



# Sharing Opportunities with Women NEWSLETTER



Young Nigerian woman making snacks learned in baking class



Minai receives food supplies

## EMERGENCY SUPPORT FOR BANGLADESH

The Tea Garden areas of Bangladesh are some of the poorest regions in the country where local people obtain day labor jobs at about \$1/ day. When COVID-19 hit, the tea companies banned outsiders from coming in and stopped hiring local people to work. This situation has caused an immediate economic crisis where people cannot earn enough money to live day-to-day.

Our local partner, Bobita, determined that the real need on the ground was emergency food assistance for 220 families, because, frankly, people were hungry. One widow of 20 years, Minai, who normally works cleaning houses, said that because of the pandemic, no one allows people into their homes. On days that she did not have housework she used to be able to find day labor jobs picking tea leaves, but that is also no longer an option. Recently, she has been cutting wood from a nearby forest and carries it to sell in the market, but this is difficult work for Minai, an elderly woman.

"For the past few months, I have had to live without food for many days. Sometimes, I can find wild potatoes in the jungle to boil. I thank God that I am not infected with the coronavirus. I am very happy and grateful that through the local women's association, SowHope has helped me with these food items. Long live SowHope!"

**Thank you for helping to support women like Minai who have struggled to live through long months of suffering.**

## WORKING FROM HOME IN NIGERIA

*"I try to think of what I can sell as a young lady. Not getting even a little income of my own worries me sometimes. But through this (SowHope funded) project, I got ideas on how to produce and run my own business, by myself." - Gloria.*

Rural Nigeria is a difficult place to be if you are an impoverished woman, especially in the areas where SowHope's local leaders live and serve. The average income is less than \$1/day per person and there are few opportunities for anyone to get ahead. Most women are uneducated and struggle each day to feed and care for their children. Tribal clashes and terrorism are continual threats to peace, prosperity, and life itself. COVID-19 has had a seriously negative impact since there is little-to-no medical care available for average and low-income people.

In one very remote village, our local leader Margaret provided a Home Economics and Skills Acquisition Project. Sixty women and girls were taught entrepreneurial skills, including how to prepare and sell products such as snacks, liquid soap, and Vaseline. She encouraged the women to take care of themselves through savings, personal hygiene, and a clean environment. Additionally, Margaret emphasized the power of forgiveness and the importance of educating their children. At the end of the project, each woman was provided a modest amount of capital to start a small business of her own. Margaret plans to follow-up with additional training and microfunding. Here are testimonials from some of the women.

*"I learned the process of making liquid soap and how to get income to help my family and now I am able to take my children to school." - Rebecca*

*"Learning a skill that can help my family is very important. I learned that while mixing a cake, following directions is important and the recipe should not be changed. I also learned about being able to forgive one another, like the herdsmen that invaded our village and killed people in our community." - Blessing*

**Small projects such as this one can make a lifetime of difference for impoverished women and their families.**

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

## IT'S OUR BIRTHDAY!



SowHope turns 15 on January 30th, 2021! We will be releasing a full 15-year report in our Summer Newsletter. You won't want to miss it!

## BOARD MEMBER, LAUREN SPANGLER

**S**owHope Board Member, Lauren Spangler, first learned about SowHope's work at a gathering with friends in 2018: "I was particularly inspired by SowHope's mission and vision, which center around the empowerment of local leaders to solve local problems." Not long after, Lauren joined the Board of Directors and the Fund Development and Marketing teams in order to lend her expertise to the cause.

Lauren, a lifelong Michigander, works as a Grants Manager for Kennari Consulting, but wasn't always planning on working in the nonprofit field. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Spanish before pursuing and attaining a Master of Public Administration, all from Grand Valley State University. "I have always been passionate about fostering equitable, sustainable, and vibrant communities in West Michigan and beyond, which is what drove me to pursue a career in nonprofit administration." Outside of work and serving as a Board Member at SowHope, Lauren spends her time volunteering with and supporting other local organizations, in addition to reading, spending time with her dear dog, Wallace, and cooking for friends and family.

Lauren cherishes her time as a SowHope Board Member, which she says provides a uniquely rewarding opportunity to support women around the world. "It is also a wonderful way to connect with other passionate advocates for women's rights through my fellow volunteers, board members, and the SowHope staff." Lauren explains that, although each program of SowHope (wellness, education, and economic) is important, she is particularly compelled by projects which



Lauren Spangler

promote and provide access to education for women who may not otherwise have the opportunity. She also believes in the power of community. "By empowering transformation within a community by those who live and work in the community", she says, "change becomes sustainable and impacts those who live in the community now and in generations to come."

If there is one thing that Lauren would encourage others to do, it would be to immerse themselves in the work of SowHope and other organizations supporting women around the world. "Consider taking an active role in furthering these missions – whether volunteering, donating, or another method", she explains. As for Lauren, she is committed to immersing herself in SowHope, "the positive change that I see in the communities that SowHope supports is more than enough motivation to continue giving my time to the organization!"

SowHope is very lucky to have her on board. Thank you, Lauren.

## BECOME A SOWHOPE STAR

**Y**ou can make a difference in women's lives by becoming a SowHope Star. SowHope Stars are people who give monthly, recurring gifts, which is the best way to help make sustainable change and help even more women throughout the year.

You can set up automatic withdrawals from your credit card or bank account, or you can write a check every month. It's easy to start, just call the office at 616-433-1575 or go online today at [www.sowhope.org/donate](http://www.sowhope.org/donate).



## Celebrate International Women's Day!

Get ready to attend our International Women's Day virtual event on Monday, March 8th, 2021.

Details coming soon at [sowhope.org/iwd2021](http://sowhope.org/iwd2021).

## THANK YOU FOR A POSITIVE 2020!

**T**hank you to all of our amazing donors for your generosity in 2020. Through 46 projects with 40 local leaders in 13 countries, SowHope impacted **7,297 vulnerable women** and their families. Many of these were lifesaving projects to help them survive during the pandemic.

## Save the Date!

We are excited to announce that SowHope's Annual Fundraising Gala (pandemic permitting) will be held on Friday, September 24, 2021 at the **Pinnacle Center in Hudsonville, MI**. For those of you who won't be able to make it to Michigan, we will be holding the Gala LIVE online once again!

This year's theme is **Make A Difference!**

It's never too early to secure your corporate or table sponsorships. Please contact Aaron Hoxworth: [aaron@sowhope.org](mailto:aaron@sowhope.org) | 616-433-1575

*Please consider investing in future generations of women through a legacy gift to SowHope. Contact SowHope at 616.433.1575 to discuss giving options.*

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