



# Sharing Opportunities with Women NEWSLETTER



*Woman cutting stone*

## FROM STONECUTTER TO SEAMSTRESS

All Aruna, from India, had ever known was stonecutting. As her family's traditional work, it was the only skill she had for earning money, until she signed up for the SowHope-funded tailoring project in her village.

At 29, Aruna is a wife and the mother of three children. She would accompany her husband whenever there was work available and, for a whole day's labor, she could earn up to 150 rupees (\$2.05).

On average, she made about \$40 a month due to the inconsistency of the weather and available work. She struggled to manage the family on those meager earnings, even to cover just two meals a day.

During the 3-month tailoring workshop, Aruna learned to sew adult and baby clothes and, using the new sewing machine she earned, became skilled enough to make and sell clothes from her home. She now earns \$75 dollars a month and has the advantage of being able to work from home where she can also be with and take care of her children.

A major outcome of this project is the **dignity** that Aruna feels as she has gained respect in her home and also in her community.

Aruna earns enough that, for the first time, she has been able to put some of her wages into savings. She says, "I want to thank SowHope for giving me an opportunity to be a part of the training. Because of this skill, I became a seamstress and now I earn money and support my family! I want to save money to start a small business and also save for a bright future for my children."

Thank you for your support which gives vision and hope, and helps to change the lives of women like Aruna.



*Aruna with her new sewing machine*



*Josephine, right, is greeted by a woman from a microfinance project*

## ESSENTIAL WORKER IN KENYA

SowHope partner Josephine, in Kenya, is an incredibly compassionate person. We first met her through a mutual friend who told us she was helping AIDS widows and orphans. At the time, she worked for the government and had recently heard of two children dying. She drove to the area where the children passed and began asking what happened. When she was told that they died of hunger, she asked if there were more children at risk of dying of hunger. "Many!" was the answer. Josephine immediately began to visit the area regularly, bringing food to distribute to hungry children and women. Eventually, she started her own nonprofit organization, Hope for Life-Kenya (HFLK).

SowHope has been funding women empowerment projects for HFLK since 2008. Ideally, we fund only sustainable development projects; however, we realized that the pandemic had created a global situation that required a temporary shift in our thinking. We offered our partners around the world stimulus funds to use in order to combat the severe economic effect of COVID-19 on our past beneficiaries and their communities.

It was no surprise when we heard what Josephine was doing early on during the pandemic. While most of Kenya was in lockdown, Josephine broke restrictions and drove to the poorer areas to distribute food she purchased with the SowHope stimulus funds. During a checkpoint stop, the police asked her why she was driving around. She explained what she was doing for the poor and was then taken to the Regional Governor. When the Governor heard all the good that she was doing, he wrote and signed a personal letter for her to carry saying that she was an essential worker, giving her permission to move about freely with no limitations.

Many lives were saved through Josephine's efforts to purchase and deliver food and other goods to the poorest people she knows. She also took the time to train women in soap-making and teach about the necessity for good hygiene, especially during the pandemic. The women were able to sell the soap to make some money for themselves.

Thank you, SowHope supporters. Your gifts were a lifeline in many places around the world, especially this past year.

**Honor a woman in your life this Mother's Day!  
Give a gift to impoverished women on their behalf.  
Share a tribute message on the SowHope Honor Wall.  
Printable e-cards will be available upon donation.**

**Samples and other information can be found at:  
[www.sowhope.org/mothersday](http://www.sowhope.org/mothersday).**

## VOLUNTEER, MITA FITZJOHN



Mita Fitzjohn

**M**ita Fitzjohn, a member of the SowHope Fund Development and Marketing Team, understands the plight of women and girls in extreme poverty. "I was born in India," Mita explains, "and moved to the US with my parents when I was two years old. I am fortunate to have come from an educated, middle-class family, yet I have seen

the impact that extreme poverty has on vulnerable populations, in countries like India." Mita was invited to attend a SowHope Gala and left inspired by SowHope's mission and the leadership of Mary Dailey Brown, President of SowHope. "As I heard about the women that SowHope serves, I knew that this was an organization I had to learn more about and support its efforts."

Mita has been volunteering at SowHope since May 2019 and continues to do so because of her position. "I have skills, empathy, and privilege. The least I can do is volunteer for SowHope." Though she believes that all three areas of SowHope's programs - wellness, education, and economic opportunities - are imperative to drive change, education is the mission that resonates with her most. "There is a direct correlation between education and a girl's ability to rise out of poverty," she

elucidates. "In underdeveloped countries, when girls can attend school and continue on, even just into their teens, there is a direct, positive impact...it not only empowers and benefits the girl, but it also benefits future generations, the community, the country, and the world."

Married for 19 years to her wonderful husband, and a mother of two amazing teenagers, Mita works for herself as a Leadership Coach. "I work with leaders to grow and develop into the best leaders they can be." She is driven by the goal to see others, and herself, achieve their potential. "I admire people who are brave enough to be authentically and unapologetically themselves," she says. "I have raised my children to be true to themselves and am working on it myself, every day." She also loves to cook, read, travel, and love on her adorable labradoodle, Wolfgang. "I like to call him by ridiculous names like Chicken Chunk, MoozGooz Piggy, Flim Flam, etc., and he responds to all of them!"

If there was one message Mita would give to any young woman around the world, it would be this: "Make education a priority, as much as you can. Even though it may be completely out of your control, know that if you demand education for yourself, you are more likely to get it...You are just as deserving as any boy, or anyone else, of a bright future. The world needs you and your unique gifts and talents. You are powerful."

A powerful statement from an incredible volunteer. Thank you, Mita, for sharing your time and talents for SowHope!

## LEAVE A LEGACY

**D**id you know you can invest in future generations of women through a legacy gift? By designating SowHope in your will or estate plan, you are making a lasting impact on the lives of women for many years to come.

Legacy gifts are important for SowHope to sustainably focus resources on programs giving impoverished women opportunities to thrive.

SowHope suggests you contact your financial advisor for any assistance setting up a legacy gift. You will need information about SowHope, including our charitable registration number, which is 14-1946849. Contact us at [info@sowhope.org](mailto:info@sowhope.org) or 616.433.1575 for more information. Thank you for considering leaving a legacy to support impoverished women around the world.

## Save the Date!

Help us celebrate SowHope's **15th birthday** by attending our fundraising Gala 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 hosting the event LIVE online!

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

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY RECAP

**T**o celebrate International Women's Day on March 8th, 2021, SowHope hosted an online event featuring partners from South Sudan, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Nepal, and Kenya. The Q&A style interview explored topics such as challenges faced because of COVID-19, finding courage and hope amid these challenges, and why International Women's Day is such a great celebration around the world. Over 70 people attended the event during the livestream and dozens more have watched the 30-minute video which can be seen for a few more weeks at [www.sowhope.org](http://www.sowhope.org).

Highlights of the interview include a gripping story from South Sudan where people are dying from hunger due to natural disasters destroying crops on top of business shutdowns due to COVID. One partner, Victoria from Sierra Leone, detailed the numerous exploitations and abuses of women and girls which have been exacerbated during the COVID lockdowns. Despite the intense suffering, each partner explained why they still have hope and how SowHope has helped give them strength to carry on.

If you missed this inspiring video, we strongly encourage you to check it out at [www.sowhope.org](http://www.sowhope.org) soon, on our Facebook page (don't forget to like us!), or on our YouTube channel, SowHope2006.

*Please consider becoming a sustainable giver of hope to women by giving monthly. Contact SowHope at 616.433.1575 to discuss giving options.*

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