



# Sharing Opportunities with Women NEWSLETTER



Women in  
microfinance training

## TERRORISM HITS CLOSE TO HOME IN NIGERIA

Boko Haram, a terrorist organization in northeastern Nigeria, continues to terrorize in many areas where our Nigerian partner, Sarah, oversees more than 25 SowHope projects empowering women. Recently, Sarah's cousin and his friend were killed during a brutal attack in her parents' hometown. During the attack, people from the town ran for their lives, including 15 of them

who have sought refuge at Sarah's house some 20 miles away. This dire situation in Nigeria is only exacerbated by a COVID surge and many people are also dying of hunger.

Even after Sarah and her entire family contracted COVID and recovered, they continue to bravely encourage women's groups in 6 states of Nigeria to carry on with their farming, vocational training, animal husbandry, women's healthcare, and microloan projects. These projects are lifelines against the terrorists, especially now during this COVID surge.

Your donations to SowHope help make it possible for Sarah to continue doing her vital work. In one of her latest reports she writes, "You have given us voices where we were completely mute, helpless, illiterate, poor, hungry, depressed, and starving. Many of us have risen and are helping many women around us to also rise. Thank you!!!"

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



Devadasis women circa 1900

## DEVADASI - A TRADITION OF SLAVERY

Despite several court orders to abolish it, there are still a few states in India which continue to practice the centuries old Devadasi tradition. Devadasi is translated as the feminine form of "slave of god". Within the tradition, young girls are dedicated for life to the temple deity, Yellamma, before they reach puberty. Families believe that the goddess will be pleased with the girls and will bless the family with prosperity. The girls, known as Devadasis, never marry mortal men. Our partner in India recently submitted a project application to help 30 women caught in the Devadasi lifestyle.

Devadasis reside right on the temple grounds, cleaning and caring for the temple. They are known as "dancing girls" who subsist by providing music and dancing at religious services. They financially support themselves and the temple by begging door to door every Tuesday and Friday and through prostitution. Due to COVID restrictions, the Devadasis have become particularly vulnerable with no ability to earn any money. They and their children (resulted from the prostitution) are illiterate, poor, and perpetually trapped in this lifestyle.

This SowHope project will teach literacy and business skills training so the women can become economically independent from the temple. The project will also provide emotional and legal support to help the women overcome the stigma attached to being a Devadasi and to restore their confidence and dignity. Please consider giving generously to this important project.

## BREAKING NEWS - AFGHANISTAN

Our partner in Afghanistan, who oversees a women's shelter, has notified us that there is a great need to expand services due to the recent transition in that country. They are hoping to add a mobile medical clinic, emergency food parcels, and a shelter for girls (12-13 years old) to protect them from early marriage. For donations, go to [www.sowhope.org/donate](http://www.sowhope.org/donate) and select "Afghanistan Project Fund".

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE - AT HOME!

2021 SowHope Gala  
Friday, September 24th

Can't make it to the in-person event?

Watch LIVE online at [www.sowhope.org](http://www.sowhope.org) at 7:30pm EST.

Even Better! Host a "Watch Party" with family and friends!

Help SowHope by creating your own "gala experience" the night of the gala or ANYTIME after the event, before November 30th.

For more information about hosting a "Watch Party":  
Aaron Hoxworth, [aaron@sowhope.org](mailto:aaron@sowhope.org) | 616.433.1575

## VOLUNTEERS, SARAH MASSIRIO & WESLEY KRUG

“It was an easy choice” to begin volunteering for SowHope, said Sarah Massirio & Wesley Krug, regular SowHope volunteers since 2018. “Aaron Hoxworth (SowHope’s Administrative Director) was discussing SowHope with mutual friends back in 2018, and Sarah was interested in helping in any way possible”, the personal connection helping spark the volunteerism. Three years later, both are active volunteers for SowHope in any way they can, including volunteering at events, proofreading SowHope publications, and stuffing envelopes. Both have found their niches as SowHope volunteers: Sarah also gives her time to the Fund Development and Marketing Committees while Wesley has found himself right at home washing dishes after many of the meet and greet events at the SowHope office.

Sarah and Wesley live in a lovely Grand Rapids neighborhood with two cats and their bunny. When they aren’t volunteering for SowHope, they enjoy musical theater, board games, and traveling. They also love helping people, whether it’s family, friends, or their community. “While we may not have endless funds to donate,” the couple says, “we like to volunteer our time and help out wherever we can.”

So, what inspires them to continue volunteering with SowHope? As an organization that serves women, SowHope holds a special place in their hearts. “SowHope provides a wonderful opportunity

to help women most in need. We see proof of the amazing work SowHope does and know there are still millions of women in need around the world, those who are often responsible for the success of their families and communities, especially in lower income areas, but are typically underserved and underappreciated for their efforts. It is vital to the success of the world at large to help women rise up and give them a chance to share their voices and stories.”



Sarah Massirio & Wesley Krug

The couple also enjoys working with the staff and volunteers at SowHope and hearing firsthand about all the positive impact the organization has on women and communities. Though SowHope has three important program areas, Sarah and Wesley believe education is the most important, noting that education is a major steppingstone to independence: “We want every woman to know that they should believe in themselves, even if it feels like no one else does.”

Join us in celebrating  
15 years of SowHope.

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

We are excited to announce that the 2021 SowHope Gala will take place in-person (COVID rules permitting) **and** online! **Friday, September 24th**, the event will be held at the Pinnacle Center in Hudsonville, MI, at 6:30pm. For those who are not able to or choose not to attend in person, we will be livestreaming the event at 7:30pm on our website, [www.sowhope.org](http://www.sowhope.org).

In celebration of our 15-year anniversary, our theme will be *Make A Difference!* with keynote speaker Mary Dailey Brown sharing how SowHope has impacted women over 15 years and how you can help make a difference, too!

The in-person event will include live music, wine, and dinner catered by the professional culinary team of the Pinnacle Center. Tickets to attend are \$125 individually. Please consider sponsoring a table of 8 at one of three levels:

1. **\$2,500 Gold Level**
2. **\$1,000 Green Level**
3. **\$500 Purple Level**

Finally, if you can’t attend or watch the night of the gala, you will be able to stream the event at [www.sowhope.org](http://www.sowhope.org) anytime and anywhere! Host or join a virtual watch party and even invite Mary to join your group for a Q&A for after you watch the event. This will be available through November 30th. We can’t wait to have you join us! The online livestream will be free to view.

## WHEN BAD DEEDS TURN TO GOOD

Margie Steiner is a long-time SowHope supporter. So, when she outsmarted a nefarious criminal, she knew exactly what to do.

Margie suffers from chronic pain which frequently keeps her up until between 4 and 6 AM. Late one night, she heard her phone buzz and saw that she had a payment of over \$100 from someone on PayPal. Curious, she emailed the person to find out why, but didn’t hear back. Suddenly, she received another payment of the same amount from the same person, which happened 10 more times! Margie attempted to sign into her account, but the password had been changed.

Believing she was the victim of a hack and identity theft, she tried calling PayPal the next day and was put on hold for 3 hours before leaving a message for a call back which never came. She turned to a friend (and SowHope supporter) Bonnie Conley who figured out that over the last three weeks, 13 people from 3 different countries had tried hacking into Margie’s email account.

After finally getting through to PayPal the following day, they were able to secure her account after she changed her email account, password, and security questions.

Surprisingly, she had \$1,300 of the criminal’s money sitting in the account. Without any way of returning the money, PayPal told Margie to do with it as she wished. Realizing that the hackers were from Africa, Margie had the idea: I could make sure that this money goes back there and does some good by giving it to SowHope!

Thank you, Margie, for letting us share your story and for thinking that good can come out of bad situations. You truly make a difference!

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