



Sharing Opportunities with Women NEWSLETTER



Sarah, front right, explains a beadmaking project to the women.

NEEDS FOR NIGERIA

Rahila applied for a microloan to buy seeds and rent a small plot to grow rice. After months of backbreaking work - cultivating, planting, and tending her field - the day had finally come to harvest. She eagerly went in the morning, only to find that some men had come during the night and picked all her rice, leaving her with nothing.

Sarah, our partner in Nigeria, has been forming women's groups and completing projects in rural areas of 5 states since 2007. She has cultivated dozens of women leaders and empowered thousands of women, like Rahila. She sows hope in places where there is great despair. In 2022, she plans to oversee 29 small projects in each SowHope program area (wellness, education, economic) that will help nearly 700 women. These projects will cost \$15,200.

The need is great because there are still many ongoing threats, including domestic terrorism, tribal wars and clashes between differing ethnic groups, growing poverty due to COVID-19, and natural disasters such as droughts and floods. In a report from Sarah, one such terrible situation was described as follows:

"In one of the communities you (the SowHope Team) visited, the pastor's wife was kidnapped for 4 months. The family and the church had to pay for her ransom and release, but she suffered greatly. Her husband was then shot and killed last month. She is a member of our group and has five children. She is desperate to learn the sewing skills we teach so that she may provide for her family. We admitted her to the class, but she needs support to pay her tuition and for school fees."

Sarah reports that, though the situation is bad and there is danger on every side, the women in these communities are grateful for the support of SowHope and donors, like you. She says, "God bless you for the well you supported in our community. It is serving over two thousand people. Some are in tears of joy every day. Everyone is behind you, all the way, may God bless you all very much."

Celebrate International Women's Day!

Get ready to attend our International Women's Day virtual event on Tuesday, March 8th, 2022.

Details coming soon at sowhope.org/iwd2022.



Jyoti, left, has partnered with SowHope since 2020.

MATERNAL HEALTH CAMP UPDATE

In 2021, Jyoti, our partner in Nepal, saw a need for women to understand maternal health. She especially noticed the huge need for many women who suffered from a prolapsed uterus (a slipping or sagging of the uterus from its original position). She decided to host a maternal health camp to educate over 300 women about maternal health, while providing access to medicine for health issues and surgery for women suffering from a prolapsed uterus.

Sabrina, a widow for 32 years, has been suffering for decades from a prolapsed uterus and can no longer work. Her son is taking care of her, but he could not afford the treatment to correct her condition. After attending the maternal health camp, she was selected along with 9 other women to receive surgery to correct her prolapsed uterus. After surgery, she wants to find work and help counsel other ladies not to hide their uterus problem so that they too may receive help. There are still hundreds of women from nearby communities that are in need of maternal health education, medicine, counseling, and surgery. Jyoti is committed to continuing to help women in the surrounding communities in Nepal.

Save the Date!

SowHope's Annual Fundraising Gala will be held on Friday, September 30, 2022 at the **Pinnacle Center in Hudsonville, MI.**

For those of you who won't be able to make it to Michigan, we will be streaming the Gala LIVE online once again!

This year's theme is **Be A Hero!**

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

VOLUNTEER ALEX COMBEN



Alex (right) and his wife Lindsey (left)

As a photographer, Alex Comben looks at the world through a distinctive lens. With this in mind, he was intrigued when his wife, Dr. Lindsey Westerhof, wanted to attend SowHope's International Women's Day photography exhibit in 2018. "That event was enough to make me passionate about their mission," said Alex, who has been a volunteer and donor ever since.

Alex grew up in Australia, moving to Grand Rapids, Michigan only 5 years ago to be with his soon-to-be wife from the States. They had a serendipitous meeting in Europe when both of them were traveling independently. They live in Eastown now with two cats, Piper and Chloe. Alex and Lindsey are both fervent supporters of SowHope, hosting or sponsoring a table every year at the annual gala since 2018. Because of his expertise, Alex wanted to add another element to the annual event. So in 2019, he convinced his employer to donate materials necessary for a photobooth to be available for all guests while he captured exceptional photos of gala attendees who are dressed to impress. The photobooth is now an annual favorite addition for SowHope supporters and their guests.

But Alex doesn't want his volunteering to end there. He hopes to help SowHope document their great work by traveling with the organization someday soon. "SowHope's approach, partnering with local leaders solving local problems using local solutions, is something that just makes sense to me," he explains, "I like that sustainability and dignity are central to SowHope's ideology. I also think their transparency is

exemplary and helps maintain my faith in them." He is inspired to continue supporting SowHope because of the change that comes from his support, "To see that we can enable proud, permanent change means we're not helping in vain."

SowHope has three important project areas: wellness, education, and economic opportunities. And though it's hard to pick one, Alex Comben is inspired by the stories he hears about economic development from SowHope projects. "Even though I think education creates the largest ripples, I like hearing about women who have these fantastic and sometimes ingeniously simple ideas who just need a tiny push to get them started. They then generate their own momentum, pay back their microloans, and become independent and sometimes leaders who end up helping other women in their area...it's heartwarming to hear about the communities who turn down more funding because of the success they have."

As a photographer, Alex likes to think about what kind of imagery would be effective in spreading SowHope's message as he hopes to capture it in the field, though he's wary that the most effective images may be too invasive because of the nature of some SowHope projects. Being able to lend his ability to further support SowHope and give the women a voice through photography is a strong motivation.

SowHope is fortunate and grateful to have Alex on our team. Thank you, Alex!



Alex taking photos at the 2021 SowHope Gala

MOURNING LOSS

With heavy hearts, SowHope is mourning the loss of two individuals very close to the organization.



Esther

Esther, one of SowHope's partners in India, recently took over as Director of the local organization. She went to her heavenly abode on December 26, 2021. Native of India, she received her Bachelor's and Master degrees in Hyderabad, India. She was married for 33 years and blessed with two children. She was passionate about her work, especially facilitating programs to support women and teach literacy. Thank you, Esther, for your 20 years of service.

Brent Muedder, husband to board member Kathy Muedder, passed away with Kathy at his side on December 31, 2021. Brent was an avid supporter of SowHope and a member of the finance team. He also served pro bono every year during tax season. Married for 42 years, he was the father of two children and found a whole new level of pride and source of joy when he became "Grampy" to his 5 grandchildren. We will miss him.



Brent Muedder

BECOME A SOWHOPE STAR



You 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.

Set up automatic withdrawals from your credit card or bank account, or 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.

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