



# Sharing Opportunities with Women NEWSLETTER



*Gudia, right, applying makeup to a customer*

## LIBERATING TRAINING IN PAKISTAN

**G**udia, a recent student at a vocational training center in Pakistan, had been working at a brick kiln since she was a child with her mother, father, and two brothers. Her family worked 7 days a week, 12 hours per day each, and together earned only \$12 a week. They ate only one meal a day. Gudia says, "We are not workers, but slaves. I had been looking for ways to live a free life, and since I joined the beautician training, I have started having the taste of that freedom as a woman, as a human being." She has completed her training and now as a beautician makes \$80 per month, almost twice as much as her entire family before.

SowHope's partner in Pakistan, Sister Zeph, the Director of the ZWEE Foundation, envisions a place where impoverished women in Pakistan can get free vocational training in areas such as sewing, cosmetology, IT, office management, and fashion design. She says, "Women in Pakistan are living as slaves because they are financially dependent on men and because of cultural taboos, religious pressures and intolerance against minorities, and lack of awareness of their own talents and abilities. We want to set them free from all these cages; but of course, the freedom starts with financial independence."

Imsha is 18 years old. Her mother died when she was a little girl. Her father wanted to get married again, so he had Imsha married when she was just 14. Her husband died 2 years later, so she returned home. However, her father did not want to feed her anymore. She had not eaten for days when someone told her about Sister Zeph's project. At the center, they gave her enough so that she at least would also have food and shelter. After completing her training as a tailor, she now works in a garment factory and makes enough so that she can afford to live independently.

"SowHope is the first ray of hope for the women. We have been working for years to lift each other up, but now we are flourishing because we are not alone anymore in this journey of women's achievements at the grassroots level." says Sister Zeph.

SOWHOPE  
EXISTS

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



*Vumi, left, and Margarite, right, talking about the project*

## SUPPLY CHAIN WOES IN THE DRC

**I**n places like the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the effects of COVID-19 have proven deadly in multiple ways. In this area of the world, scant medical care allows the virus to run rampant and uninhibited through communities. Additionally, the broken supply chain around the world caused a terrible impact on rural women in Eastern DRC.

These issues have stolen so many of the advancements for which our partners, Victor and Theo, have worked to achieve for women survivors of armed violence (WSAVs).

In response, they applied for a grant from SowHope that would address the economic and traumatic shock for 150 WSAVs. Their project aimed to ensure the women were safe, to create access to capital to save their small businesses that were nearly destroyed by the lockdowns, and to help them be well-informed.

Victor and Theo hosted several meetings in the community, actively involving women in the planning. They formed local savings and microloan groups, identified the most pressing local need (reviving the trade sector, in their case), planned the project goals and activities, taught business management, and strived to build stronger families by teaching men a more wholesome societal role with the goal of reducing gender inequalities.

Vumi, a 52-year-old mother of five says, "When COVID-19 arrived, I began to lose hope. But I have seen a big change in my life because of this project. My husband has changed for the better. I wake up with the hope of being able to provide food for my family. Thank you for bringing us back to life."

*Your donations help women like Gudia, Imsha, Vumi, and Margarite thrive in these SowHope-funded projects. To donate, visit [www.sowhope.org/donate](http://www.sowhope.org/donate).*

## BOARD MEMBER DAN BALFOUR

Dan Balfour was first introduced to SowHope in a unique way. “I got to know Mary Dailey Brown”, he said about the President and Founder of SowHope, “when she studied for her Master’s of Public Administration (MPA) in our Program at GVSU”. Dan served as a professor in Public Administration for over 30 years and Mary needed to take his class to finish her MPA degree in 2010. “I was impressed by her passion as she founded SowHope and by the focus on empowering women as opposed to providing charity.” Though this may have been the first time he heard about the organization, he continued to be introduced again and again as a professor. Serving as the capstone professor, Dan taught a half dozen SowHope personnel, including a former Board President, other board members, and current and former staff. His impact on the organization is extensive.

Personally, Dan kept tabs on SowHope over the years, helping the organization by consistently sponsoring a table at the Gala and inviting new folks to the event. It wasn’t until 2019, though, that Dan became more heavily involved. Mary Dailey Brown was thanking him, once again, for bringing guests to the gala, when he said to Mary, “If there’s anything else I can do, let me know”. It was then that he agreed to join the Board of Directors himself. And, just as importantly, Dan also began to serve as a key member of the program team. “Dan understands fully and quickly the nuanced issues involved with our partners and in our granting process”, said Mary Dailey Brown, “he’s exactly the type of person we need on the program team.”

Dan is happily retired now, able to spend more time with his wife of 35 years, Mayumi, with whom he’s had one son, Trevor. But he’s definitely not sitting still. Along with his commitments to SowHope, Dan continues to find joy and camaraderie in his sport of choice, tennis, which he has been playing for 50 years. He led his men’s

tennis team to 3 straight state championships in United States Tennis Association tournaments (2017-2019), earning the Western Michigan captain of the year honors in 2018. In 2022, he played on a team that made it all the way to the national championships held in Orlando, FL. Other accomplishments in his illustrious career include co-authoring a book, *Unmasking Administrative Evil* (now in its 5th edition), which has won 3 national book awards and is still being used to instruct students in public service ethics.



Dan Balfour

Dan loves being a part of SowHope. “I enjoy interacting with our diverse group of volunteers and donors who care about making the world a better place for those with the least opportunities”. He’s heavily committed to the mission and believes that all three of SowHope’s program areas (wellness, education, and economic opportunities) are extremely important and lead to empowerment. He wants to continue to volunteer for SowHope as long as he can because of the crucial work the organization does. “There’s always more to do, more women that can be empowered”. And one message that he has for any young woman around the world, “Don’t let anyone else (including SowHope!) define who you are and how you live.”

Thank you, Dan, for everything that you’ve done and continue to do for SowHope. You are a SowHope Star!



## LET ME SOW HOPE 2: A DOCUMENTARY

To commemorate the 10-year anniversary of the “Let Me Sow Hope” documentary, SowHope will be showing a worldwide premiere of the second installment of “Let Me Sow Hope” at the fundraising gala on Friday, September 29th, 2023.

The documentary will feature brand new stories of women empowerment, success, and tragedy from around the world. Viewers will enjoy never-before-seen footage and unbelievable inside looks at SowHope projects, interviews with women who are benefiting from the projects, and conversations with the heroic local leaders orchestrating the projects.

Don’t miss your opportunity to see the premiere, which will also be livestreamed online during the broadcast of the SowHope gala. Stay tuned for more details coming soon and save the date!

## UPCOMING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY EVENT - MARCH 8

On Wednesday, March 8th, the world will celebrate International Women’s Day. It is a time to recognize the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women and a day that marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity.

To commemorate this global holiday, SowHope will be hosting a community-wide event in Grand Rapids on March 8th, 2023. So, save the date and stay tuned for more information available at [www.sowhope.org/IWD2023](http://www.sowhope.org/IWD2023)!

### Leave a Legacy

*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 years to come.*

*SowHope suggests you contact your financial advisor for any assistance setting up a legacy gift. Our charitable registration number is 14-1946849. Thank you for considering leaving a legacy to support impoverished women around the world.*

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