



Women Inspired NEWSLETTER

LIVING THE DREAM



Dr. Itengré performing an obstetric fistula repair

In 2021, SowHope helped Dr. Itengré achieve his dream of building an obstetric fistula repair clinic. The clinic officially opened in June 2022, and it remains the only center for obstetric fistula repair in Burkina Faso in West Africa. This past November, a SowHope team had the privilege of visiting the clinic, meeting with several beneficiaries and witnessing an obstetric fistula repair surgery.

SowHope was welcomed by Dr. Itengré and his team of about 20 staff members.

The SowHope team took a tour of the two-story building, which is comprised of an operating room, a pharmacy, a laboratory, two consulting rooms, two recovery wards, a large courtyard with four rooms for boarding, and a covered space used for vocational training.

The clinic has capacity for 30 patients. At the time of the visit, there were 25 women in the clinic. During the tour, SowHope was welcomed with singing and dancing by women who had already received their surgeries and were still at the clinic going through the vocational training.

Dr. Itengré and his wife, Rasmata, a nurse, believe in holistic care for the patients due to their need to overcome the stigma and trauma attached to having an obstetric fistula. The clinic provides the obstetric fistula repair surgery, social, emotional, and spiritual support, and vocational training. The women go back to their villages with restored dignity and can live an even better life than before. Unfortunately, most of the women come from villages that are under attack from terrorist groups.

The SowHope team was impressed by what they saw at the clinic. The transformation of the women from downcast and outcast to smiling and confident is truly remarkable. Even more extraordinary is that in just one year the clinic has conducted 302 surgeries.

The women are incredibly grateful for the clinic and the care that they receive. They also appreciate the opportunity to learn income-generating skills that they now use to earn a living. They express their gratitude for SowHope's sponsorship, which is only made possible by generous donors like you! Thank you for your support to inspire impoverished women around the world.

Your donations go towards projects like this in Burkina Faso. To donate, visit www.sowhope.org/donate.

GLOBAL TEACHER OF THE YEAR!

One million dollars! That is how much our partner from Pakistan recently won in the Varkey Foundation annual Global Teacher competition, an award ceremony held in Paris. There were over 7,000 applicants from 130 countries, and our own dear partner Sister Zeph was chosen for this prestigious award, paid out over 10 years.

At age 13, Sister Zeph decided to leave school after experiencing chronic bullying and abuse



Sister Zeph with French President Emmanuel Macron

as a minority child in her school. She started studying on her own and included her younger sister and some friends in her "free school". Every year, she paid to take the required tests to progress through each grade of High School and University. At 39, she now holds two master's degrees! She never stopped teaching others who either could not afford school or were afraid to go, continuing her "free school" without charging any fees for all students. Along the way, she has helped over 3,000 students graduate from high school and many are now in university. Her award will be applied to her "free school" for children.

Running a school for children was not enough of a dream for Sister Zeph and she soon realized that women are woefully undereducated and disempowered. In the year 2007, she started a vocational training center for women so they could learn money-making skills and gain some independence. SowHope has helped fund some of the classes for this women's vocational training school since 2021. With SowHope's support, Sister Zeph not only trained over 400 women through the vocational center during the period, but also launched a clothing brand to generate jobs for women and to fund the free school and the vocational center.

We cannot be more thrilled that Sister Zeph was chosen for this significant award. She certainly deserves it. Congratulations, Sister Zeph!

Save the Date!

SowHope's Annual Fundraising Gala will be held on Friday, September 27, 2024 at the **Pinnacle Center in Hudsonville, MI.**

We will be streaming the Gala LIVE online!

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

SOWHOPE
EXISTS

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

SOWHOPE STAR VOLUNTEER, PRISCILLA WILSON

When Priscilla Wilson met Mary Dailey Brown at a church in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), she never imagined that one day she would live right down the street from the SowHope office in Grand Rapids, Michigan. "I was working as the children's director at a church in Abu Dhabi



From left to right, Andy (husband), Robin (daughter-in-law), Nathan (son), & Priscilla

in 2012 when a woman named Mary came to our church to talk about SowHope. We went out to lunch together and she told me all about the organization. My husband Andy and I loved the work and began supporting it from there." Priscilla liked SowHope from the start because she could tell that Mary cared for women and their shared faith in Christ centered around a common goal. Eight years and a short stop in Bath, England later, Priscilla's husband Andy became a professor at a local university in Grand Rapids.

A former third grade schoolteacher and mother of three, Priscilla and her husband of 47 years have lived overseas in Qatar, UAE, and England, spending nearly half of their married life (23 years) outside of the United States. "I disliked being so far away from home, but I loved the adventure of it all. We lived in a completely different culture than we could have ever imagined, and we learned to adapt and make lifelong friends with people who were not like us. I loved that our children attended an American School that included children from about 40 different nations. It was fascinating!" Originally from Minneapolis, Priscilla had never lived in the Greater Grand Rapids area, but when she moved in 2020,

she immediately thought of Mary and called her to explain they would soon live close by. Mary knew how high-capacity Priscilla was and snagged her as a volunteer as soon as she could.

Over the last few years, Priscilla has become one of SowHope's most dedicated and hardworking volunteers. Priscilla has taken the reigns to run the volunteer mailings that SowHope does every month or so. She finds volunteers for the day and helps facilitate the process so that every piece of mail gets exactly where it needs to go. She also helps grab the mail and regularly volunteers at SowHope events. Really, if there is any help that SowHope needs, Priscilla is ready to give it a shot. "I especially like the mailings," she explains, "because we have a room full of men and women who help; and it has been fascinating to get to know them. They are a wonderful bunch!" She is inspired to keep volunteering because she has seen the fruit in the lives of many women through the work of SowHope.

When she is not giving her time to SowHope, Priscilla is a savvy eBay seller. She also plays the flute and makes a mean Michigan blueberry coffee cake (just ask the mailing volunteers!). Family is incredibly important to her, and she loves to help others. As a former teacher, the education part of SowHope's mission really hits home. "I believe if you teach someone to do something, it becomes a lifelong benefit to them. It's the old saying, 'if you give a man a fish...except in this case, it's a woman! If I could say one thing to any woman around the world, it would be a quote from one of my favorite characters, Winne the Pooh: 'Promise me you'll remember you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, smarter than you think, and loved more than you'll ever know.'"

Thank you, Priscilla, for giving your time and talents to SowHope. Your contributions are worth more than you'll ever know!

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2024 CALL FOR AWARD NOMINATIONS

On Friday, March 8th, 2024, SowHope will be hosting the second annual International Women's Day march in downtown Grand Rapids! The inaugural event was a huge hit in the community. In addition to glowing news coverage from several stations, SowHope received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the over 100 people who attended the festivities.

This year, we invite you to join us at Calder Plaza, downtown Grand Rapids, on March 8th. Similar items will be on the itinerary, including an award ceremony to honor local women leaders, the 1-mile celebratory march around downtown, and refreshments provided after the walk is complete.

SowHope is excited to host this event again, but we need your help! **We are calling for nominations for local women leaders who are making a significant impact on the Greater Grand Rapids community.** Please visit sowhope.org/2024iwdnomination to fill out an award nomination for who you believe deserved to be honored as a woman of the year in the areas of social, economic, cultural, or political achievements.

Additional event details will be available on our website at www.sowhope.org/iwd2024. Join us to celebrate! See you there.

SOWHOPE DOCUMENTARY COMING SOON



Some partners who will be featured (left to right): Abi, Dr. Itengré, and Victoria

The SowHope team has been hard at work capturing footage of incredible projects that we wish to share with you and a broader audience soon. We are excited to announce the release of our second documentary, which will feature some of the most impactful stories of hope from around the developing world!

The documentary aims to highlight how the unique mission of inspiring women along with the equally unique strategy of partnering with local leaders creates extraordinary, lifelong change not only for the women but for entire communities. Stay tuned for the upcoming release date. You will not want to miss this!

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