



SowHOPE Newsletter

"Where there is despair, let me sow hope." FRANCIS OF ASSIS

MOTIVATORS IN BANGLADESH

In Bangladesh, SowHOPE partners with a microloan organization that employs 18 women as "motivators" to oversee and teach the women who belong to loan clubs of up to 25 women each. The motivators travel on bicycles from village to village each week to meet with the clubs,

providing lessons on good business practices, record keeping, women's rights and health and hygiene. Each is responsible for 24 clubs, and is paid 6,250 Taka (\$89 USD) per month.

The motivators also visit the home of each loan recipient to monitor the progress of her business, consult and counsel about business or family issues and to offer encouragement and support.

One of the motivators, Sima,



A motivator teaches good health practices at a weekly microloan club meeting.

was able to stop the unlawful marriage of a 13 year old girl to a much older man. Sima convinced the parents that the girl would have a much better future if she were allowed to continue with her schooling. The girl would have children later and thus be healthier, and her children would benefit from her education. The parents agreed and the child remains in school.

Three other motivators reported cases of abuse in which they intervened. One loan recipient's husband stole her loan money. When confronted by two motivators, the man returned the money to his wife. Motivators were also able to stop the payment of seven dowries, which is the illegal, but common, practice of exchanging money for a bride. The motivators said that 23 club women have been able to purchase land in the last year! This will enable them to improve their quality of life.

The loan clubs Mary Dailey Brown and Bonnie Conley visited were full of praise for their motivators. Although often the same age as the loan recipients, the motivators appear to function in a maternal role. Both Mary and Bonnie were struck by the quiet strength of these women and the courage they demonstrate in confronting cultural issues in advocating for women and their families.

WHY LOCAL LEADERS?



Minima, Project Coordinator

One key to SowHOPE's success is its dedication to partnering with local leaders who know the language and culture. One of CEO Mary Dailey Brown's tasks is to locate national people who know the solutions to local problems in their communities and meet those needs in a specific, measurable way.

In India, for example, where illiteracy is a problem, SowHOPE has partnered with a non-government organization (NGO) which offers literacy classes to

women. This NGO has a proven track record of helping illiterate women learn to read and do math. Over 85% of the students graduate with a fifth-grade level from their one-year of classes. Funds from SowHOPE have helped to keep this mutual success story going. Minima, who met with Mary and SowHOPE board member, Bonnie Conley, works with this NGO and is an example of the kind of local leader SowHOPE seeks.

Minima is a Project Coordinator for the Literacy Project in a northern city of India. She oversees ten literacy groups consisting of 15 women each; she locates meeting places for each group, hires and supervises all teachers, observes classes and keeps

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Minima on her way to visit a literacy class, talks on a cell phone while her son drives the family motor scooter.

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records. Minima holds a BA and MA in Education and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Social Science. This well-educated woman is paid 700 rupees a month as an honorarium plus 200 rupees a month for office expenses – a total of \$14.75 in American dollars.

Married and operating a charitable endeavor of her own, Minima personally cares for 11 orphans in her home. When she was three years old, Minima's very poor family placed her in a boarding home with the hopes that she would receive an education. Rejected by her family and treated badly in the boarding home, Minima has had counseling to deal with these hurts. She shared these thoughts, *"But this rejection gave me an encouragement to do something for girls and women. I was tortured in boarding home. So this all I have in my heart. Through counseling I forgive all those who have committed this to me. But still, I have these things inside me and that's why I'm doing the work with women. I like to help women."*

An organized, energetic woman, Minima seems tireless. Bonnie says, "We were very impressed with how the women in the literacy classes and the teachers responded to her with obvious respect, admiration, and affection. As a local leader, she has relevance, credibility, and cultural unity that empowers her to be incredibly effective."



Mary, Minima, and Bonnie

WAYS TO KEEP INFORMED

You can be aware of SowHope's plans and projects by visiting our website, SowHope.org. Also find us on Facebook at facebook.com/sowhope or on Twitter at twitter.com/sowhopeorg. If you'd like to receive this newsletter electronically, sign up at SowHope.org.

HIGHLIGHTED PROJECT

A trafficking prevention program in six provinces of Bangladesh, where an average of 50 girls a day are trafficked across the border into India and Pakistan to a life of forced prostitution. (See: <http://www.sowhope.org/projects.html>)

MEET A BOARD MEMBER

When Mary Dailey Brown explained her vision for SowHope to Doreen Mangrum, she was impressed by Mary's stories. She also saw in Mary's face the deep passion she had for the women she described. Doreen had no doubt Mary would accomplish her goal.

Doreen, of Middle Eastern descent, holds two Master's degrees and is a director of special education for a school district. What she heard about the plight of women in poor areas in the Middle East, coupled with her deep love for children with special needs, caused her heart to go out to the mothers and grandmothers in poverty stricken areas. She says, "When you consider these variables in my life's journey, a devotion to SowHope seems inevitable."

As vice-chairperson of the board, Doreen assists with nominations and orientation of new board members, and acts as chair when the chairperson is unavailable. She leads the program committee which reviews and scores applications for funding. Doreen has also been supportive in fundraising and is a huge encouragement as she helps the board maintain the vision and mission of SowHope.

Doreen loves the fact that her Chaldean background brings diversity to the board. Having worked in Michigan public schools for 31 years, 22 as an administrator, Doreen knows that her leadership skills help build the success of the organization. Looking to the future of SowHope, she says, "Empowering women and giving them hope in their future and that of their children will be our greatest accomplishment."



Doreen Mangrum

SOWHOPE EXISTS

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

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED:

- Invite Mary to speak to your book club, Rotary club, bridge group, church group, or senior center. Call 616-433-1575 or e-mail brenda@sowhope.org.
- Suggest SowHope as a Christmas giving project at your place of employment.
- Contribute airline miles.
- Encourage your friends and family to join us on Facebook.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Dr. Diana Sharp - Chairperson
Doreen Mangrum - Vice Chairperson

David Crawford - Treasurer
Bonnie Conley - Secretary

Chandra Colley
Dr. Pamela Ogor

Ainur Nurtay
Ruth Posthumus

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President & CEO: Mary Dailey Brown