



SowHOPE Newsletter

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

LIFE TRANSFORMED IN BANGLADESH

SowHope continues to see success in its economic endeavors in Bangladesh. Microloans given to women, who are trained in business practices, are a great source of encouragement and true life change.

Shefali, 30, is married and the mother of three. The family was living in one room, and their income was so inadequate that they often ate only one half meal daily. The room they lived in was in tatters. Shefali was very anxious for the future of her children.

One day she met a field worker who informed her of a local microloan group and invited her to apply for a loan, which she did. She decided to buy rice and prepare puffed rice to sell in the market. She also repaired their room, making it more sanitary.

She steadily made a profit, paying the family bills and her loan payment. She gained more and more profit until she was able to buy a cow! She now sells both milk and puffed rice.



Shefali

Her oldest son passed his exams successfully, her oldest daughter is in eighth grade, and her younger daughter will attend school next year. Shefali's ability to pay for her children's school expenses is a dream come true for her, and her family life is now much happier.

DOCUMENTARY FILM

SowHope plans to make a documentary film about life for women in Africa. We would like to raise \$15,000 to produce, edit and distribute this inspiring and informative film. For more information about how you can support this project please email info@sowhope.org.

WHAT WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD ARE SAYING ABOUT SOWHOPE

Christine (DRC Birthing Clinic) - "The big difference of the SowHope clinic compared to the hospital are our nurses (a married couple). They are really wonderful to us when delivering our babies! We also had training from them and I learned about sexual violence. People didn't know how they got infected by HIV and now they know. We can see that things are changing."



"The equivalent of 5 jumbo jets worth of women die in labor each day... life time risk of maternal death is 1,000x higher in a poor country than in the west." Nicholas Kristof, Half the Sky (see page 2)



Susan (Kenya Goat Group) - "We formed this support group for single women and we see each other every week to encourage each other. When we come together we have everyone contribute 100 shillings (\$1.18). When we get enough money, we give it to the poorest woman to buy a goat and she can make money selling the milk to neighbors that have HIV/AIDS."

Beatrice (DRC Literacy Class): "I love the class to death! Parents here send boys to school and not girls so I am motivated to stay in class, because now I finally get to learn to read!"



Tabitha (Kenya Microloan Group), a widow. She "feels like the group is her husband because everyone has open hearts." She is so encouraged by the group that she "wants it to stay together forever."

CREATIVE VOLUNTEERING - 25¢ A DAY



Carol Washburn

Many people volunteer for SowHope – stuffing envelopes, setting up a Photo Exhibit, telling others about the organization. One woman has created her own way to offer support while informing others of the global impact SowHope has for women in developing countries.

After reading Nicholas Kristoff and Sheryl WuDunn's *Half the Sky*, Carol Washburn decided she wanted to do something to help the poor women about whom the

authors had written. A few days later, in reading a feature article about SowHope and CEO Mary Dailey Brown in the *Grand Rapids Press*, she discovered that SowHope was doing precisely what the authors of *Half the Sky* were advocating: fighting poverty by offering poor women medical, economic, and educational opportunities.

She met with Mary and by the time their conversation was over, Carol knew she had found a way to “do something.” She would find a project that would not only raise money for SowHope but would also help other people learn about how SowHope is transforming the lives of poor women around the world.

The SowHope Year-end letter gave her an idea when she read that a donation of \$975 would open a new village to a microloan club for 15 women. Remembering the words of a friend, that “it takes so little to make a huge difference in the life of someone desperately poor,” she did the math and finally decided on her project: she would ask 12 individuals to contribute 25¢ a day for one year so as a group they could raise \$1095, enough money for a new microloan club that would give 15 families a hope and a future. She would keep in touch by sending each participant a monthly update about a SowHope project, such as the birthing clinic in Congo, the microloan projects in Bangladesh, and the literacy program in India.

She ended up finding 36 participants and forming three groups. Since participants put their donations daily, weekly, or monthly into a “giving jar,” they called their effort “The Giving Jar Project.” By the time the project ended, the three groups had raised over \$4000, more than enough money to start three new microloan clubs. To celebrate, they invited Mary to a “dessert party” so they could meet her, give SowHope their donations, and hear more stories about how SowHope is transforming the lives of some of the poorest women in our world.

SOWHOPE
EXISTS

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

BOOK REVIEW - HALF THE SKY

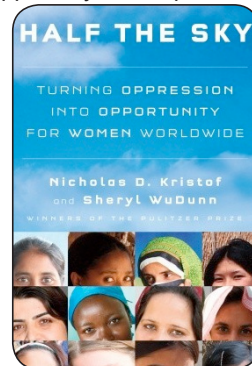
Written by Carol Washburn

Spouses Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn's *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* is an amazing book about the poorest women in our world, women who live in developing countries that have non-existent, broken, or compromised justice systems; in countries where women and children, especially girl-children, have little or no value; in countries where women and girls are fed last or not at all, educated last or not at all, given medical attention last or not at all, abused inside and outside their homes, maimed by acid attacks, and bought and sold for sex and labor. In such places, when a woman or girl is no longer useful due to brokenness or disease, she is disposed of like trash.

Believe it or not, however, it is not a book about defeat. With just a little help from someone who cares, every woman we meet in this book is redeemed. Every story ends in victory. After organizing the women in a slum in India to fight back against a man who was terrorizing them through abuse and rape, Usha Narayane became the heroine of their community and dedicated her life to empowering them. This story alone makes the book worth reading.

But there are so many more. Srey Rath, after escaping from a brothel where she had been enslaved, received a small microloan which she used to begin a business that enabled her to support her son and send her sisters to school. Simeesh Segaya, crippled by a complication trying to deliver her baby and then cast out by her husband and neighbors, withered away for two years in a hut on the edge of her village. But when she finally received medical attention from a devoted physician, she recovered and dedicated herself to helping other women in desperate need of healing. Thirteen-year-old Woineshet Zebene, after saying “no” to a marriage proposal because she wanted to stay in school, was kidnapped and repeatedly raped by her would-be suitor and his friends. As is common, the elders of her village said now Woineshet had to marry her suitor-rapist, since no other man would have her. But donations from America gave her family the means to send her to the city where she could continue her education in peace. She hopes to study law so she can “take on cases of abduction.”

Half the Sky is one of the most powerful books you will ever read, (now on DVD: look for it on amazon.com.) As the authors note in their introduction, these are stories of transformation. “It is change that is already taking place, and it can accelerate if you just open your heart and join in.”



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Write to the authors, asking them to profile SowHope in the next edition and also in Kristoff's *New York Times* column. Email him, <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/opinion/editorialsandoped/oped/columnists/nicholasdkristof/index.html>. You will find WuDunn on Twitter @WuDunn.

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