

Pulling together and healing others: Kenya

by Debra Durkee, Reporter

Nothing comes for free, but hard work and dedication will pay off.

That's the message that's being sent by Future in Our Hands – USA to the women's groups in Kenya. These groups – made up of village women of any age – are stepping up and making sure that they're investing all that they can into their future.

The women's groups supported by FIOH–USA in Kenya are typically made up of between 10 and 40 members. These members get together on a regular basis, and work together to develop activities that will not just bind them as a community, but will help them to become self-sufficient.

FIOH–USA provides the start-up funds, which work as an endowment. Once the group's project is up and running, the money they earn is recycled back into their community. They've established a credit union in the Kibuye Market, one of the largest and busiest markets in East and Central Africa.

It all began in 2006, with \$3,000.

Now, micro loans of up to \$600 are given to begin the group's programs. The interest rates are low, and – three years later – all loans have been repaid.

“Since then, all the groups have continued to add to it, and the programs are still going,” says FIOH–USA's Linda Glaeser, SSJ.

Activities include tailoring, basket-making, rope weaving, woodworking, selling corn and other grains, renting chairs, fish scaling, raising chickens, gardening, sewing and farming.

And the women of the groups are always looking ahead to the next project, and new ways to earn money to better support their families. Tailors expand their kiosks and purchase more sewing machines, gardeners plant new crops, and the women themselves are always looking to learn new skills.

And FIOH–USA is also looking ahead, hoping to expand the programs that they run in Kenya to groups in Tanzania; more than ten groups have already begun to petition for help from FIOH.

Petitions include thorough business and expense plans.

“We would love to be able to support groups in Tanzania,” says Glaeser. “The work these women do is just amazing.”

She also feels honored to help make what might have once been only dreams into reality. Their plans aren’t just creative, they’re thorough – and they’re designed to make life better not just for them and their immediate families, but their extended families and the villages they call home.

Propositions include starting an apprentice program for the next generation of tailors, for starting a nursery school that will make sure children get off to the best start that they can, and for starting their own vegetable kiosks.

For more information on FIOH–USA and their programs, visit www.futureinourhandsusa.org, or their blog at www.fioh-usa.blogspot.com.



FIOH–USA is offering a helping hand to women’s groups in Kenya who are making a difference in the lives of everyone around them.