



# iZōsh® International Spring Newsletter

March 2025 | Issue 5



iZōsh Chapters have granted **1,033 women** a total of **\$351,569 in micro loans!**

## A Note from the iZōsh International President

When North American women gather for an iZōsh Chapter Event, we learn together. Through our learning, we are exposed to the oppression and exploitation faced by women globally who are living in extreme poverty. The World Bank says that extreme poverty means living on less than \$2.15 per day. These statistics inform and motivate us to want to empower and uplift women living in extreme poverty.

Together, we learn about the complexity of extreme poverty. It is shocking and heavy. Exposure to information about the hard realities of our world without clear action steps can be overwhelming, but at an iZōsh Chapter Event we are more than consumers of information. We engage in action that change women's lives. A microloan for a woman's sustainable business can change everything for her. That is exciting!

As we select women to receive microloans, the tone of an iZōsh Event shifts. The information we gather motivates us to action. Facts about women living in extreme poverty that might be seen as depressing information, are instead used to change our mindsets and lead us to engage.

What is the mindset change? We have learned about the oppression and exploitation of women but we have done something! Instead of only lamenting the hard realities of our world, we have joined together to engage a situation we care about and make a positive difference. The resulting celebration is exuberant!

We leave iZōsh Events knowing the women who have been funded with microloans are empowered to start and/or grow their business. They have hope for their future and for their children's future.

This past year, iZōsh Chapters gathered, learned, gave and celebrated. We look forward to doing the same this year! Thank you iZōsh Chapter Leaders for your commitment, creativity, and compassion for women living in extreme poverty all the while helping North American women find ways to make a huge difference!

Gratefully,  
Robin Phillips  
President





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## What happens at an iZōsh Chapter Event?

Women gather, learn, give, and celebrate the joy of empowering women living in extreme poverty. Events are exciting and inspiring, and Chapters fund business loans in real time!

## Spring is here! Join a Spring 2025 iZōsh Chapter Event

Mark your calendars to participate in an upcoming iZōsh Chapter Event

### Friday, April 11: Birmingham, MI

6:45pm at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer's Great Room (1800 W. Maple Road, Birmingham MI 48009)

Guest speaker Abadir M. Ibrahim is the Associate Director of the Human Rights Program at Harvard Law School. His research focuses on African approaches to human rights and encompass the intersections between global human rights normative structures and non-Western cultural/religious institutions and traditions. Dr. Ibrahim, from Ethiopia, has been personally impacted by the power of microloans.

Email [izosh.birmingham@gmail.com](mailto:izosh.birmingham@gmail.com) for more info.

You can learn more about the Birmingham Chapter on their website: <https://www.lcr.church/izosh/>

### Monday, June 2: Cumberland, Maine

Tuttle Road Community Church  
(52 Tuttle Road, Cumberland, ME 04021)

Kim Wiggin, co-founder of Lilies of the Field in Ghana, will be the guest speaker. With degrees in music and special education, Kim has had an exciting career as a teacher and administrator for over 35 years. She is also an avid traveler and has visited exotic locations all over the world. Following her retirement from teaching in May 2018, she built a home in Pram Pram, and lives in Ghana for part of the year supporting Lilies of the Field Academy.

Email: [izoshmaine@gmail.com](mailto:izoshmaine@gmail.com) for more info.

## Book Review: The Last Hunger Season

Book Review by Beryl McHenry, long-time supporter of iZōsh International

The Last Hunger Season, by Roger Thurow, is a brilliantly constructed book about the glaring consequences of traditional agricultural practices in Kenya, and their effect on the families whose livelihoods depend on smallholder farms. Most smallholder farmers in Kenya are women. The work is backbreaking with yields less than a quarter of the yields of their counterparts in other countries.

Throughout the book, Thurow follows the lives of four Kenyan families, weaving their stories into a narrative that highlights the inadequacies of governmental policies and very limited educational opportunities. Readers are shown the realities of malnourishment, impossible manual labor and the hopelessness of the people in beautiful but often painful detail. For example, the death of a family's calf whose sale was to provide money for educational fees means the family may not eat adequately for months. To this family, education is more important than food, Thurow's narrative points out.

One of the main characters of the book, Leonida, joins with her neighbors to take advantage of a new enterprise called the One Acre Fund. It is January of 2011 in Kenya when the neighbors band together to join the organization's training. The goal of One Acre Fund is to help families rise above poverty by providing seeds and training in how to plant the crops, departing from the practices their ancestors used a century ago. They provide instruction on improving the quality of seed, tools, soil nutrition, grain storage, grain transport, establishing credit, etc. The details of how these tasks were accomplished in the past, before newer practices were introduced and took their place, is astonishing. With traditional agriculture practices, there was always an expected "hunger season," referring to the length



of time between planting and harvest when everyone must expect to be hungry. It could last for one month up to nine months, depending upon the inevitable catastrophes, the arrival of the rain, or how much of the harvested grain could be held back from sales to feed the family during this period. All of this has made life for smallholder farmers in Kenya completely unpredictable.

Leonida and her neighbors determine that they will change their lives by taking advantage of the new social program, which presents a number of dilemmas to be solved. Reading the book, we find ourselves caught up in their problem-solving, then are much relieved to learn that the first season, in 2011, yielded a significantly better harvest than the previous year. Leonida declares that they have begun their exodus "from misery to Canaan."

The author's credentials include reporting for the Wall Street Journal for thirty years and being senior fellow for global agriculture and food policy at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, along with authoring many books and articles on the subject of global hunger. His work in The Last Hunger Season gives a very readable picture of the continuing food crisis in Africa, as well as a hopeful picture of what can be done to improve the situation for the future.





## iZōsh Resource Highlight: Recommended Books

### Learn

iZōsh Chapters gather to learn together. But Chapter Events are not the only way to learn about microloans and the impact they can have on women living in extreme poverty.

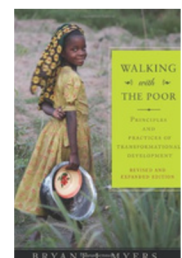
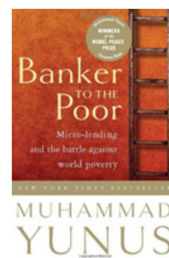
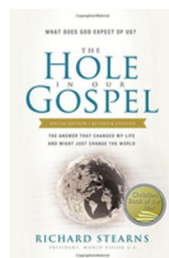
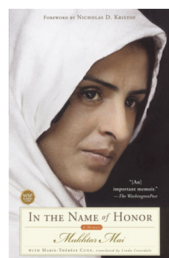
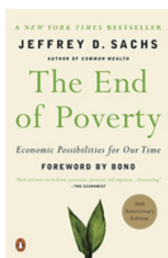
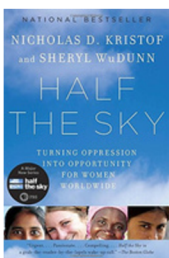
Did you know there is a recommended book list on the iZōsh International website? You can find it here: <https://izosh.org/recommended-books/>

From economic development resources, to autobiography and fiction, there are many opportunities to continue learning beyond the iZōsh Chapter Events.

### Share

Have you recently read a book that helped you understand the situation of women across the world living in extreme poverty? Is there a book that's changed your worldview or inspired you to support microloans? We would love to hear from you and help share your learnings with others!

You can send your book recommendations and/or book reviews to [izosh.international@gmail.com](mailto:izosh.international@gmail.com).







## A Look Back: Celebrating our 2024 iZōsh Chapter Events

### Spring 2024 Events Recap

The Birmingham, Michigan iZōsh Chapter hosted an event on April 26. The speaker was Jennifer Cummings, Managing Director of The Mandate, an organization breaking the stronghold of poverty globally by providing basic care, education, and commerce.

The iZōsh Maine Chapter hosted a spring event on May 6th with guest speaker Florence Reed. Reed is the founder of Sustainable Harvest International and an example of what can happen when a woman has an idea with the potential to benefit many.

### Fall 2024 Event Recap

iZōsh Maine hosted a fall Chapter Event on September 30th. The group of women gathered with cups of Burundi Star Coffee and chocolate and learned about the history of the advancement of women's rights in the U.S. comparing it to global advancement of women's rights via clips from the documentary "Half the Sky." The ladies entered into worlds vastly different from the American reality. However, as the presentation unfolded, it was evident that no matter the location, given the opportunity, women can flourish.

Six tables of women, each woman bringing her dues, were able to fund, or partially fund, microloans for 20 women from 10 different countries. The microfinance loans supported a diversity of entrepreneurs. The loans that were funded range from a loan to improve a woman's coffee production in Uganda, allow a woman in Pakistan to purchase a buffalo, enable a Mongolian farmer to purchase seeds and tools for crops to a loan that will enable a woman from El Salvador to purchase materials for reed mat making, just to name a few.

Every iZōsh Chapter event includes celebrating. We celebrate the fact that in 2024 we were able to invest in so many women and we pray the ripple effect of the microloans funded through Chapter Events will reach far and wide.