

## HIGH ALTITUDE TRAINING CAMP (LORNAH KIGLAGAT, KENYA)



### THE STORY

Lornah Kiglagat has won multiple Olympic medals, broken four world records, and has won marathons around the world. However, like most Kenyan women, she was raised in a rural community where it is extremely difficult for women to break from their traditional roles and become financially independent. In order to pursue her running, Lornah had to travel alone to the capital city of Nairobi, and with no where else to go, she spent the night before the race in a bathroom. The next day, without breakfast, she qualified for the Kenyan World Cross Country team, placing sixth in the race. Since then, Lornah has come a long way in her career, and with the money she has made on running she is pursuing another one of her goals. In 2000, Lornah opened a high altitude training camp for women in Iten, Kenya.

The camp, which is completely supported by Lornah and the money she wins from racing, is set up to give female runners an opportunity to focus completely on training. Coaching for men in Kenya is far more abundant than it is for women, who struggle to find facilities and coaches who will coach them seriously. However, with the success of female runners in Kenya, some traditional families are beginning to see that their daughters may have a real chance to earn money competing. The camp is more than just a place to train athletes; it is a place where women are gaining equality both in athletics and socially. Not all of the women at Lornah's

camp will become Olympians, but the camp also provides classes and training so that women who have attended the camp can continue to improve their lives and gain their independence. Several women from her camp have gone on to receive scholarships to schools abroad.

### FACTS ABOUT WOMEN IN KENYA

- Kenyan women hold 5 of the top 10 fastest recorded times in the marathon and 3 of the top 10 (9 of the top 20) in the half marathon. Kenyan women hold world records in the 20,000m, 25,000m and 30,000m track races.
- Women constitute 54% of Kenya's voting population, but occupy only 4% of its parliamentary seats, and 18% of its judgeships.
- In Kenya, marital rape is not recognized as a crime. According to U.N. estimates, 42 percent of Kenyan women are battered by their husbands or partners. Perpetrators are rarely punished, however, because laws do not recognize domestic violence as a specific crime.

### HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Support Spark in its efforts to raise money for Lornah Kiglagat and the High Altitude Training Camp. A portion of the proceeds from **Spark's Black and Pink Ball** at the W Hotel on **October 13<sup>th</sup>** will fund the construction of a library for the girls at the High Altitude Training Camp, in which the young runners can study.

