

World Vision

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ON THE COVER

Heena, 17, is empowered to be an agent of change in her Delhi neighborhood.

EUGENE LEE/WORLD VISION

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“I have seen a lot of change, positive change, in my children's lives. They have dreams now. ... Like how a lamp brightens the darkness, the girls keep the honor of the house.”

—RAMKRIT, FATHER OF SPONSORED CHILD ARTI



JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

World Vision staffer Alex Ekiru translates as Rich and Reneé Stearns pray for orphans Peter and Samson in Kenya.

Blessed by a Broken Heart

By Rich Stearns

THE SCENE WAS familiar: a flimsy hut in a forgotten place, a freshly dug grave just outside, the sorrowful faces of boys too young to be on their own. The feeling was also familiar: my throat tightening and eyes stinging with tears, the unmistakable sense of my heart breaking—again.

I met Peter, 12, and Samson, 10, in Turkana, northwestern Kenya, a region hit particularly hard by drought. The effects of the East Africa hunger crisis are evident here (see the Summer 2017 edition of *World Vision* magazine). The boys' mother had succumbed to starvation a few months earlier; it was her grave outside the hut. Their father was killed in a cattle raid—violence born of desperation.

"We have no other food in the house," Peter told me, nothing more than a squirrel that Samson had managed to trap, skin, and cook. The one bright spot in the boys' circumstances is that they can go to school, where they receive a meal. They're learning Swahili, one of the official languages of Kenya, although the two words they've mastered are ones they no longer need: "mother" and "father."

My time with Peter and Samson bore a striking resemblance to an encounter on my first World Vision trip, in 1998. Rakai, Uganda, was the setting, and the boys living alone in a flimsy hut were Richard, 13; Mugeru, 11; and Muzeyi, 10. AIDS, not hunger, was the reason their parents lay in the crude graves outside. But otherwise, their grief and hopelessness were identical to those of the boys in Turkana.

Two child-headed households, 19 years apart. I had developed no new defenses against the sadness that overwhelmed me in Turkana. Bearing witness to children's suffering has unfortunately become a regular occurrence in my years as World Vision president.

But I thank God for my broken—that is, re-broken—heart. World Vision's founder Bob Pierce famously prayed, "Let my heart be broken with the things that break the heart of God," and I've come to realize it's not a one-time request. Bob prayed it earnestly and often so that his heart would be broken again and again, never to truly heal as long as there were hurting children in the world.

When we look at the life of Jesus, we find that he was, as Isaiah described him, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (53:3, ESV). Jesus' heart was continually moved to compassion as he encountered the lame, the sick, the widow, and the orphan. Surely God's heart breaks today each time he looks upon children in distress like Peter and Samson.

That's how we, too, must view suffering in the world—through the eyes of a grief-stricken Father gazing at his children in pain. Facts and figures about a widespread hunger crisis are instructive, but they don't engage us emotionally. It's almost incomprehensible that *25 million people* across East Africa are at such risk that they need food assistance. But we can focus on Peter and Samson, two children among millions who need our help.

I believe God created us with breakable hearts for this purpose. You might even look at it as a blessing. Only by breaking can our hearts stay tender enough to see as Jesus sees and love as Jesus loves. **WV**

World Vision U.S. President **Rich Stearns** is the author of *The Hole in Our Gospel* and *Unfinished*. Follow him at twitter.com/richstearns.

FIND MORE

See photos from the countries where World Vision works at wvmag.org/photos.

Embark

COME IN AND SEE THE WORLD

ONLINE

Read more about World Vision's response to the hunger crisis in East Africa at wvmag.org/hunger.



Bangladesh

A little girl finishes her poem with a flourish at the Barandipara Child-Friendly Space (CFS). World Vision started the project with funds from the For Every Child campaign, but now the community has completely taken over management of the CFS.

LAURA REINHARDT/WORLD VISION



Kenya

It's a festive scene at St. Catherine's Girls Chepnyal Secondary School in Sook, Kenya—and this graduation is worth celebrating. In this area, female genital mutilation (FGM), also known as cutting, is still a common practice marking a girl's entrance to womanhood, so World Vision established an alternative rite of passage to both protect girls from this harmful tradition and educate parents on its devastating effects. Five hundred people—including the village chief, wearing traditional dress and leading the line of girls—participated in the ceremony.

JON WARREN/WORLD VISION



Lebanon

Syrian refugee children find a fleeting moment of joy in the corridor between their tents in a refugee settlement in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. More than six years of war has torn Syria apart and displaced more than half of its population. These children are among the more than 5.1 million people who have fled to other countries as refugees.

JON WARREN/WORLD VISION



• Embark

Uganda

Across Africa, World Vision champions good hygiene as part of its water and health programs. Linda's family has built a pit latrine, a hand-washing station, a dish rack, and this ingenious bathing shower, created using a plant that stays green all year. Linda, 10, and her family can take thorough, private baths in a place of beauty.

JON WARREN/WORLD VISION



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A conversation with
Washington Post columnist
Michael Gerson.

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EXPLORE THE ISSUES FACING PEOPLE IN POVERTY

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A trio of sisters are
creating waves of change
in a Delhi community.



Kenya

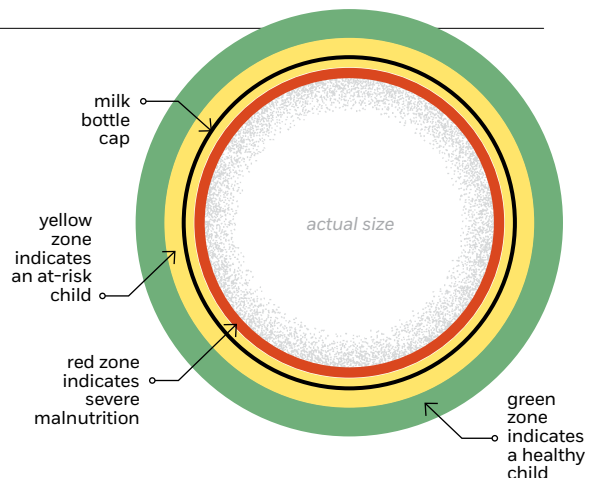
World Vision oversees a distribution of food aid in Turkana, Kenya, as part of an effort to reach 2.7 million people suffering from hunger in East Africa. Areas of focus include life-saving food, clean water and sanitation, healthcare, and agricultural training. Read more about the food crisis on the next page.

JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

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JON WARREN/WORLD VISION



MEASURING HUNGER

You've seen the photos—children getting their arms measured with the mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) strips to gauge their level of malnutrition. A measurement in the red zone indicates severe wasting in children from 6 months to 5 years. How small is a child's arm when it measures in the red? Just 115 millimeters (4.5 inches) around—slightly smaller than the cap on a gallon of milk (about 119mm or 4.7 inches). **WV**

Update: Hunger Crisis

The food crisis in East Africa continues. Thanks to your generosity after reading our summer 2017 cover story, we've raised funds to provide aid in East Africa, but the crisis is still raging.



Ethiopia

The number of people who need emergency food aid has **grown 39 percent** since January to **7.8 million**.



Kenya

Currently, 2.7 million people need food assistance, and the number is **expected to reach 3.5 million**.



South Sudan

6 million people are severely food insecure, **up from 4.9 million** in February. In areas where famine was declared, a rapid influx of aid has helped, but the situation remains precarious.



Somalia

6.7 million people face acute food insecurity, **up from 6.2 million** in February.

Better together

Between July 17 and 28, World Vision partnered with seven other organizations, including CARE and Save the Children, to raise global awareness of the East Africa hunger crisis and fund response work in the region. The Global Emergency Response Coalition raised \$3.7 million to battle famine.

FOR UPDATES on the East Africa hunger crisis, visit wvmag.org/hunger.

On the ground

Irish actor Liam Cunningham—known for his role in HBO's "Game of Thrones"—recently visited World Vision programs at two settlement camps for South Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda. He met refugees forced to flee their homes because of South Sudan's conflict and hunger crisis. An estimated 2,000 refugees cross into Uganda every day, 86 percent of them women and children. **WV**

In the Field

PHILIPPINES

World Vision began its relief operations after more than 200,000 people were **forced to flee violence** in the city of Marawion on the island of Mindanao. At least 1,000 displaced families have taken shelter in evacuation centers and relatives' homes, and World Vision is providing them with hygiene kits and items like blankets and mosquito nets.

BANGLADESH

In one of the country's worst natural disasters in recent years, Cyclone Mora's heavy rains triggered a series of **landslides** in southeastern Bangladesh, including one area where World Vision works. At least 130 people were killed and half a million were displaced. Staff did an initial assessment of the damage and provided food and water to displaced families at a World Vision-run emergency shelter.

MALI

Something to celebrate: In June, World Vision drilled its **1,500th borehole well** since 2003 in Mali. World Vision began its water work in Mali in the late 1970s with digging freshwater wells. **WV**

Michael Gerson on:

Reasons to Hope in the Fight Against Poverty

By Johnny Cruz

Michael Gerson says his best moment as adviser to President George W. Bush was watching the president approve PEPFAR—the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. PEPFAR helped turn the tide against the raging AIDS crisis in the early 2000s, and the bipartisan effort expressed a faith-informed belief in universal human rights and dignity. Michael is now a weekly columnist for *The Washington Post*, writing about everything from politics and foreign policy to culture and religion. He has traveled to South Sudan and Lebanon to see World Vision’s work. We spoke with him about his travels and how faith-based groups can work with the government to fight poverty.

How can the government work with faith-based organizations and religious communities to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people?

THE IDEAL APPROACH is for the government to provide the kind of scale necessary for response efforts and for churches to not just work with federal funds but also add their own element. The church’s distinctive is their concern for the whole person—body, soul, and spirit. That is something government can’t do—reach people’s deepest spiritual and emotional needs. Both the government and churches have comparative advantages, so both need to be involved.

The scale of many of these problems is much larger than the response by private and religious institutions. In an issue like the AIDS crisis, when there were 30 million people infected, saying “Let the church take care of this problem” would not have worked. The scale of the problem was too great. The response needed to be coordinated in a way where government was irreplaceable.

But the government also needs to understand that it’s often best to work through trusted private and religious institutions in



Michael Gerson

• Discover

providing help. Sometimes that's a cultural challenge for people in government. They don't understand it's possible for religious people and those in government to cooperate for the common good.

How does foreign assistance play into that cooperative work, and why is it critical?

IN GOVERNMENT, it's rewarding to work with officials like members of Congress to build support for these programs. It's sometimes not an easy argument to make because foreign assistance is money that goes to noncitizens. You have to make the case why it's necessary. I've enjoyed the challenge of making that argument in the private sector—that America's role in the world does not just depend on our military power, it also depends on our moral standing. We can serve both our values and our interests by promoting hope as an alternative to hatred and promoting development as an alternative to terrorism, drug cartels, human trafficking, and many of the problems that take root in failed states, weakened governments, and bad economies.

Americans need to understand that we have a moral role and obligation in meeting these needs and promoting these alternatives. We also have an interest as a country in trying to remove the sources of conflict and violence in our world. And I've seen programs do that—where whole communities can be changed when they move from disease and poverty to health and hope.

Does foreign assistance actually work, and if so, how?

IT CAN WORK, and it does in many cases. This is not to say these programs are perfect. But PEPFAR is one example—not just of a successful program, but a program that has changed its approach and identity at least three times to respond to the most current needs.

It began as just an emergency program: Put up tents; get people on treatment; save the lives of people in mortal danger. After that, the goal was to scale up. Then in

2008, PEPFAR shifted its focus to building health systems that were necessary now that we had redone a lot of our emergency response. The goal was to reach sustainability by building health systems. Now there's another change aimed at effective prevention—to reduce new infections through early treatment, which makes the disease much less communicable. Resources are shifting to aggressive prevention.

If PEPFAR were a business, that would be a really good record of responding at least three times over the course of a little more than a decade to redo their approach to meet current needs. I've seen some of these programs that could be used as examples in management schools.

You've seen some of World Vision's programs in South Sudan on one of your trips to that country. What can you tell us about your experiences there?

SUDAN IS A country many Americans have been interested in over the years, and South Sudan is a country that exists because of America in many ways. There had been an endless civil war between Sudan and what is now South Sudan, and the U.S. helped end it and bring about the birth of a new nation. I was there when independence was finally achieved. It had been hard fought, hard won. The country had serious development problems, but it was very hopeful.

In this case, we have seen real political digression and the growth of internal civil war. On the trip with World Vision, we saw the re-emergence of conflict—the stress that eventually became a civil war. And now, because of conflict and other reasons, they're facing famine in South Sudan.

Often, people take interest in an issue for a certain amount of time, and then it goes off the radar screen. Sudan has been in that category. A lot of Americans were interested in the emergence of a free South Sudan. And now we're not taking as much interest in the future of that country, though they have a lot of very serious needs. It happens too often that our attention is trendy, and that is a problem because these situations require long-term answers, long-term commitments, and long-term solutions.

What are the pitfalls of a cause becoming trendy?

THE WORST ONE is that you lose the trust of the people you're working with in the countries themselves. When they see Americans come in interested only in trafficking or water and wells, but that interest is not sustained, they feel betrayed—and they should. A long-term, sustained commitment is the way our hosts and the people we serve measure our seriousness. It's one of the reasons that organizations like World Vision are so important.

Another problem is getting the funds where they're needed, not just where they're popular. A lot of organizations have had a tough time raising money, say, for the Syrian conflict. It's one of the greatest needs in our world, but fundraising sometimes has not reflected the urgency of what's going on. At times there's a mismatch between evident needs and donations to causes that go in and out of favor.

That's another reason it's important to listen to the voices from the field, to listen to people who are working in these countries to see where the cry of need is loudest, and to work there in sustained ways that build community trust. The ultimate goal is to be patient in the pursuit of wise policy. That's true of government and it's true of the nongovernmental organization world as well.

You mentioned the refugee crisis. You traveled to Lebanon with Rich Stearns to see World Vision's work with Syrian refugees. What was the most memorable part of that trip?

ONE OF THE most moving parts was to visit an indigenous Christian church that was doing outreach to Muslim refugees. There's been a lot of sectarian conflict in Lebanon over the years, and this kind of sacrificial service for people who are not of your own tribe has tremendous power when you see it in action. The church had converts from their outreach, but the goal was not so much conversion as it was helping people in the community.

A lot of refugees in Lebanon are not in camps. They live in between buildings and in parking lots. So when their neighbors who are of a different faith take care of them and welcome them, it does something spiritual. If people of faith are not forces of reconciliation, they're not very useful. This should be one of the great contributions Christians bring to these situations—a spirit of reconciliation. Not just the provision of aid; the Christian distinctive should be to bring people together.

What gives you hope that conditions can improve for people living in poverty, both in the U.S. and around the world?

THE SOURCE OF hope I've seen most directly is in sub-Saharan Africa—going from 50,000 to 17 million people on treatment for AIDS because of PEPFAR and the Global Fund. I recently went to a rural clinic in Rwanda. At clinics and hospitals, I always ask to see cases related to malaria and AIDS-related opportunistic infections because I have an interest in those issues. At this clinic, I was told there are no cases. It's

**“
If people of faith are not forces of reconciliation, they're not very useful. This should be one of the great contributions Christians bring to these situations—a spirit of reconciliation.”**

because AIDS treatment in that region was universal, as was malaria treatment. Now they're dealing with more chronic conditions instead of acute or infectious conditions. It was a return to normalcy rather than being in the presence of an emergency. Of course, it's not the case in every place, but it is true in some places.

That is due to the American people who supported these programs with their representatives and tax money, people who advocated for these issues more broadly, and religious partners that joined in these efforts, like World Vision. This is a victory for our country in the best sense of victory, where no one's defeated. It's a victory where everyone wins. I'll never be cynical about the ability of government and the private sector to work together to solve problems, because I've seen it in this case.

Most World Vision supporters won't see firsthand the work in communities around the world, yet they give faithfully. What would you tell them about the long-term impact of their support?

BEING EFFECTIVE requires patience, commitment, and faith. Patience to give over time, because human needs are sometimes difficult and complex. And faith that human beings can be helped, that lives can be improved, that people can be saved, that children can live out full lives.

You can't parachute into a community. You have to be there long term so people know you can be relied on and know you're faithful. And when we are faithful, the results can be seen. We should take hope in that. I think huge problems like the refugee crisis or the AIDS crisis can be solved because I know that in every individual life, change is possible. Faith should inform the way we give, the way we support causes, and the way we, as Christians, play our role in the world. **ww**

LISTEN to the full interview at wvmag.org/podcast. Read Michael Gerson's weekly column at wapo.com.

GIRLS

FIGHT

BY ELIZABETH HENDLEY
PHOTOS BY EUGENE LEE



BACK

Empowered by sponsorship, girls in one Delhi neighborhood are overcoming the challenges of traditional cultural expectations and the perils of life in urban India to transform their community.



Above: A rooftop view of south Delhi's sprawling neighborhoods includes skyscrapers in the distance. Left: Many families in Arti's area lived in Nehru Place until 2002, when the government decided to develop the area and moved thousands of people to "resettlement colonies" on the city's outskirts. Right: These isolated resettlement colonies are packed with people living along narrow lanes. Previous page: Arti and Heena are two of 250 girls in this Delhi neighborhood who have learned self-defense techniques.





A THREATENING HAND GRABS ARTI YADAV BY THE SHOULDER. THE 16-YEAR-OLD ESCAPES THE HOLD WITH AN ELBOW STRIKE TO HER ATTACKER'S HEAD, STOPPING JUST SHORT OF CONTACT. AS QUICKLY AS THE MOVE WAS MADE, ARTI'S SERIOUS FACE FALLS, AND SHE AND HER FRIEND, THE "ATTACKER," BOTH LAUGH.



There's been no fight or disagreement. Arti and a handful of other teenage girls, dressed in tidy maroon and white uniforms, are practicing self-defense techniques at a park in their south Delhi neighborhood. They have to be prepared in case a "teasing" incident turns physical.

Harassment is one of many challenges girls and women face in Delhi, a sprawling city where Uber drivers navigate the same streets cows meander freely. Ancient ruins and modern monuments dot India's capital, home to almost 21,000 millionaires who make their fortunes in sleek glass and steel towers—mere miles from the poor neighborhood where Arti's family lives.

Families here struggle with a clash of cultural expectations and urban realities. For Arti's parents, moving to Delhi 30 years ago was the first step in changing the course of their children's future. Now, with World Vision's help, they're overpowering poverty, harnessing the opportunities a city like Delhi can provide, and trading child marriage for college textbooks. The family now follows a completely different trajectory—and the change took less than a generation.

FACING FEARS AND CONQUERING THEM

THE PARK WHERE Arti, a sponsored child, and her friends practice their self-defense moves isn't much of a park. It's little more than a square of dirt strewn with rocks and trash and bound on all sides by pockmarked lanes clogged with people, motorbikes, cows, and rickshaws. Concrete and cinderblock houses up to five stories high line narrow alleyways, including the street where Arti lives with her parents, three sisters, and younger brother.

Many families here migrated to Delhi from rural areas across India. Rapid urbanization took place against a backdrop of explosive economic growth, sparked by economic reforms, foreign investment, the technology boom, and an emerging middle class with money to spend. Between 1990 and 2015, India's urban population nearly doubled from 222 million to 429 million.

Those who come from rural areas to urban centers often swap one set of challenges—lack of quality education and healthcare, limited job opportunities—for another. A city of 25 million, like Delhi, brings problems such as violence and exploitation, pollution, and unsanitary, overcrowded living conditions.



“

ON THE FIRST DAY, WE WERE SORE FROM LEARNING THE MOVES. AFTER DOING THE COURSE, MY SELF-CONFIDENCE IMPROVED. IT GIVES ME MORE CONFIDENCE WHEN I'M OUT OF THE HOUSE BECAUSE I KNOW HOW TO HANDLE MYSELF.”

— ARTI YADAV

Sponsored child Arti looks out on the neighborhood in South Delhi where she lives with her parents, three older sisters, and younger brother. Their involvement with World Vision has transformed the family from passive to powerful.

As teenagers and young women, Arti and her older sisters, Rinku and Renu, face these challenges every day—especially unwanted attention and harassment from boys and men. Often called “teasing,” a term that understates the extent of the problem, even common exchanges between boys and girls can quickly escalate to something more harmful. A recent U.N. study found that 92 percent of women in Delhi reported experiencing some sort of public sexual violence in their lifetime.

In 2012, the brutal rape and subsequent death of a female medical student on a Delhi bus made headlines across the globe. Similar incidents continue to come to light, with Delhi ranking as the most unsafe city in India; from 2014 to 2015, crime against women here grew 20 percent. High unemployment and school drop-out rates mean there are usually men and teenage boys hanging around with little to do, and India’s patriarchal culture gives them license to act with nothing to lose.

“Boys skip school and hang around not doing anything,” says Arti’s sister Renu, 19. “They comment on appearance and say derogatory terms. It’s vulgar and makes girls into objects. It affects their sense of worth.”

Two years ago, Arti and her friends Nisha and Vijeta were walking along the bank of the nearby Yamuna River, stopping periodically to draw their names in the sand. A group of boys began following them, taunting them by calling out the names they saw written in the sand. As the situation escalated and the girls became fearful, they ducked into a friend’s home for safety.

Because of incidents like this one, World Vision staff partnered with the Delhi police and arranged for girls in the neighborhood to take self-defense training. So far, 250 girls—including Arti—have participated, each one receiving a maroon and white uniform.

“On the first day, we were sore from learning the moves,” says Arti, laughing. “After doing the course, my self-confidence improved. It gives me more confidence when I’m out of the house because I know how to handle myself.”

CHALLENGING HARMFUL TRADITIONS

YOUNG WOMEN IN India increasingly want to feel they can handle themselves outside their homes—despite deeply ingrained cultural traditions that hold them back.

Though the legal age for marriage in India is 18, child marriage remains a significant problem. An estimated 47 percent of girls under 18 are married—the highest number of child brides in the world. Poor families are sometimes eager to marry off their daughters, who are seen as economic burdens; and

the younger a girl is when she marries, the lower her dowry needs to be. Arti's own parents married young—her mother, Lalmati, was 10, and her father, Ramkrit, was 14.

“Parents always feel they have no support if they have no sons,” says Renu. “Our father is very supportive and treats us as equals.” But, she continues, “Our mother is always talking about how she has only one boy, and she’s constantly after Rinku” to get married, because Rinku is 21.

Both Arti and younger brother Ravi are sponsored, but the entire family—and their whole community—benefits from World Vision’s presence in their neighborhood. Since the siblings became involved with World Vision five years ago, they’re better able to confront the common notion that daughters aren’t as valuable as sons.

A network of ever-present World Vision volunteers and staff, especially Amrita Singh, 31, are ingrained in the lives of families in the neighborhood. Amrita, a Christian, has been working on their block for five years, and everyone knows her. Petite and soft-spoken, she’s nevertheless a force of change here for dozens of families. Along with several World Vision volunteers, she’s helped Arti and her sisters slowly blossom from shy to strong, changing their father’s perception of his daughters.

Ramkrit and Lalmati came to Delhi in 1986 from Azamgarh, a small city of about 111,000 people east of the capital in Uttar Pradesh state. Ramkrit’s father was a farmer whose yields weren’t enough to sustain the entire family, so he asked Ramkrit to leave and find work elsewhere. The couple chose to move to India’s capital, where he’s worked for 30 years as a master cutter for a clothing factory. On his most productive days, he earns 460 rupees (US\$7).

He participated in World Vision workshops and trainings for parents, learning about the importance of education and community involvement for his children. As he became more trusting of World Vision, he allowed his daughters to venture out of the house to the World Vision center in the neighborhood.

“I have seen a lot of change, positive change, in my children’s lives,” he says. “Before, they were in this room only, these four walls. They didn’t have dreams. They didn’t interact with neighbors or friends.”

His daughters now choose their own path, one less dictated by traditional expectations. “I definitely want to go to college after school instead of getting married,” says Arti. The talkative 10th grader likes studying English. It’s likely she’ll pursue the same field of study as her older sister Renu—a general bachelor of arts degree, which includes courses in political science, English, Hindi, and education. A World Vision volunteer counseled Renu on which subjects to take, and she’s already planning to earn a master’s degree in humanities.

“Lots of girls sit at home and don’t go to school,” Renu says. Her ultimate goal, she says, is to teach—“a teacher at a school and also teaching needy students out of my home.”

PROTECTING VULNERABLE CHILDREN

BUT RENU ISN'T waiting to help needy kids in her neighborhood. Social issues like child labor, abuse, and exploitation thwart the dreams of vulnerable children. To help protect them, World Vision started Child Protection Units, groups of older teens and adult community leaders who monitor the neighborhood for child rights violations.

Renu belongs to one of their area’s five Child Protection Units. The group of 10 is well-versed in children’s rights, laws regarding children,

Right: Arti and her friends now walk along the riverbank—once a place of harassment—unafraid. Bottom left: Lodi Gardens offers a welcome respite from the chaos of the city’s streets. Bottom right: A thick shroud of record-breaking smog envelops Delhi, making it difficult to breathe.





and how to report abuse, making them successful advocates for children who aren't aware of their own rights: those being abused, exploited, made to enter into a child marriage, or forced to work instead of attend school.

Their efforts are often behind the scenes, but they directly address and work to eliminate harmful cultural practices on a community-wide scale. Depending on the severity of each situation, the group intervenes themselves, involves World Vision staff, or reports it to the police. The group gathers weekly at the World Vision center, and they're in constant contact by smartphone between meetings.

Renu's group recently handled the case of a young teenager whose mother was sending her to marry a man in Lucknow, a city about 325 miles away in Uttar Pradesh state. When the Child Protection Unit became aware of the situation, "we called the Lucknow police to warn them," says Renu, and the marriage was stopped. Since their group became active in 2015, they've resolved 10 cases.

It's not just social issues that affect children in Delhi—pollution and unsanitary conditions take a toll. The city is sometimes shrouded in thick, barely breathable air, and last fall, a combination of factors made Delhi's air pollution international news. Record-breaking smog, the health equivalent of smoking two packs of cigarettes per day, even forced schools to close. It's one of the only equalizers in a city with a massive gulf between rich and poor. The wealthy suffer along with the impoverished, but trash-burning for warmth in poor neighborhoods makes a bad problem worse.

"The living conditions disturb me," says Arti. "Mostly the drainage and the animals all around pooping." Cows wander the streets of her neighborhood undisturbed; in this Hindu-majority country, they are revered and allowed to go where they please. Yet in another reflection of the disparities created by wealth and poverty, no cows wander the leafy lanes of Delhi's upper-class enclaves.

One way World Vision bridges the gap is with field trips for Arti and other sponsored children to places like Lodi Gardens, Delhi's equivalent of New York's Central Park. Frequented by the city's wealthy residents, Lodi Gardens has lush grass perfect for games of badminton, picnics, and relaxing to a backdrop of birdsong.

Though it's just across town from Arti's home, it seems worlds away. Their neighborhood is isolated from most of Delhi both physically—the metro doesn't service this area, and travel other than by foot costs money families here don't have—and psychologically. With no easy way or reason to leave

HIS DAUGHTERS NOW CHOOSE THEIR OWN PATH, ONE LESS DICTATED BY TRADITIONAL EXPECTATIONS.





Above: Renu's Child Protection Unit communicates by smartphone—affordable and accessible in the city—to raise concerns about child rights violations in the neighborhood. Left: Rinku teaches sewing and craft classes at the World Vision center.



Arti and members of the Star Children's Club spend time with children who live or work at the neighborhood dump, shining their own light to help others.

“

THEY HAVE DREAMS NOW AND HAVE THE CONFIDENCE TO MOVE AROUND AND COMMAND THEIR OWN LIVES. THEY CAN TALK WITH ANYONE. LIKE HOW A LAMP BRIGHTENS THE DARKNESS, THE GIRLS KEEP THE HONOR OF THE HOUSE.”

—RAMKRIT YADAV

HELP A CHILD

become an agent of change in his or her own community. Sponsor today by completing and mailing the form between pages 16 and 17 or calling 1.866.962.4453.

the neighborhood, children don't know the opportunities that lie beyond their own streets. Even day-long visits to places like Delhi's planetarium, water parks, or hockey matches encourage children to widen their horizons—and their prospects in life.

EMPOWERED TO HELP OTHERS

THE SUCCESS OF World Vision's presence in a community demonstrates itself in children and teenagers becoming agents of change in their own lives, their families, and their neighborhoods, ensuring lasting progress. Through self-defense classes, Child Protection Units, children's clubs, and more, Arti and her family have transformed from passive to powerful.

There are 32 children's clubs in this section of the neighborhood, comprising of children and teenagers who meet regularly to encourage each other, learn about children's rights, and take what they learn out into the community. Each club has a different focus assigned by World Vision staff, and Arti's club—named Star Children's Club—centers on child labor. For the past year, their main activity has been meeting children who scavenge trash or live in the neighborhood dump.

Piled high atop rickshaws and tractors, loads of garbage arrive here several times a day. It's a place of ramshackle tin structures with tarp roofs and broken glass littering the ground—but for an hour each afternoon, Arti and her 11 fellow children's club members transform it into something else.

They teach numbers and both Hindi and English alphabets, then lead the kids in a drawing exercise to express their hopes, challenges, dreams, and issues they face. They sing songs to teach the importance of hygiene and handwashing. There are lollipops and games, laughing and clapping.

The role Arti and her friends play with the children here is similar to the support Amrita and other World Vision staff provide for Arti and her family: a familiar face, reassuring presence, unwavering encouragement, and helping hand.

Ramkrit's face lights up when he talks about the change he's seen in his daughters as a result of their involvement with World Vision. Before, he says, they “didn't have dreams, they didn't trust. Now they can visit other places and change their thinking. They have dreams now and have the confidence to move around and command their own lives. They can talk with anyone. Like how a lamp brightens the darkness, the girls keep the honor of the house.”

Once afraid to venture from her home, Arti now walks confidently into the dump for an afternoon session with the children there, empowered by her own transformation as a sponsored child. Though the cultural and social problems in Delhi can seem like obstacles too big to overcome, Arti fights for her future—and she packs a punch. **WV**

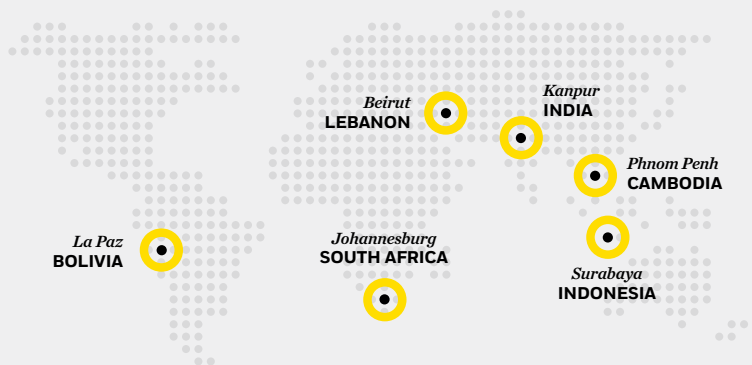
Annika Harris of World Vision's South Asia and Pacific office contributed to this story.



WORLD VISION'S URBAN WORK

AND HOW TO PRAY FOR IT

By Elizabeth Hendley



AS THE ECONOMIES of developing countries grow, the global trend of urbanization grows with them. As

a result of urban migration, approximately 860 million people live in slums, according to the U.N.

Since its beginning in 1950, World Vision has been dedicated to reaching the most vulnerable children. Today, that means increased focus on urban work, as almost half of all children on Earth live in an urban community. In cities, they're at higher risk for violence and exploitation and often live in unsan-

itary and crowded conditions.

Building on our decades of expertise, we're finding new, sustainable ways to meet the challenges urban communities face. That's why we've started pilot programs in cities across the globe to see what works and what doesn't—and then apply what we've learned in other urban areas. Pray with us for this work and for the children and families we serve. 🙏

PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

City population:
2.2 MILLION

Percentage of
Cambodians in
urban areas:
20%

Pray for city authorities to include voices from poor communities in the crafting of policies that affect their neighborhoods, especially around the issue of land rights.

KANPUR, INDIA

City population:
2.7 MILLION

Percentage of
Indians in
urban areas:
31%

Ask God to protect children vulnerable to child labor, and pray for children who have been freed, as World Vision helps them transition into education and vocational training.

SURABAYA, INDONESIA

City population:
2.7 MILLION

Percentage of
Indonesians in
urban areas:
51%

Pray that the city's government would prioritize policies that benefit children, and that World Vision can successfully navigate the political complexities of urban poverty.

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

(ORLANDO EAST SETTLEMENT)

City population:
2 MILLION

Percentage of
South Africans in
urban areas:
62%

Ask that God will continue to provide economic empowerment opportunities to families living here, strengthening partnerships and community advocacy.

LA PAZ, BOLIVIA

City population:
2.3 MILLION

Percentage of
Bolivians in
urban areas:
67%

Thank God for youth involvement in city-planning processes and changes to the city's constitution.

BEIRUT, LEBANON

City population:
2 MILLION

Percentage of
Lebanese in
urban areas:
87%

Pray for relationship building between historically divided people groups living alongside each other in communities across the city. Ask God to bring safety and peace to these neighborhoods.



ONLINE When a family leaves a rural area to resettle in a city, are their children better off? Meet seven families navigating this question in two cities in India: visit wvmag.org/india.

**A WILLINGNESS
TO SAY YES | 28**

Loula Merkel's life changed when she stepped into God's plan.

Inspire

MOTIVATING YOU TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

**WHERE ARE
THEY NOW? | 30**

A former sponsored child in Bolivia successfully challenged tradition.



“
I constantly tell my students that they have to, like I did, have a dream and never let go of that dream.”

—FELISA RAMOS VALENCIA,
FORMER SPONSORED CHILD, *page 30*

EUGENE LEE/WORLD VISION



LAURA REINHARDT/WORLD VISION

A Willingness to Say Yes

A Chicago woman steps into God’s plan for her life.

By Laura Reinhardt

AS AN INTERNATIONAL development major in college, Loula Merkel thought she knew about poverty. But one book changed her perception—and her life—forever.

Loula was working at a biotech startup in Chicago when a co-worker, Tracy Mathews, invited her to a Women of Vision meeting. Tracy was president of the Chicago chapter of Women of Vision, a ministry of World Vision. Spending time with the group, Loula found herself surrounded by people who openly attributed the good things they had to God.

The group did a study of *The Hole in Our Gospel*, written by World Vision U.S. President Rich Stearns. “I thought I had a pretty good sense of what poverty is and what was going on in the world,” she says. “I had no idea. That book was such an eye-opener.”

Raised in the Greek Orthodox Church, Loula’s involvement with Women of Vision led her to ask questions about Jesus: “Who is this? Have I heard the full

story? Am I missing something?” As she dug deeper into the answers, Loula accepted him as her Savior—and began the journey of rekindling her faith.

Diving deep into the realities of poverty made Loula feel guilty. But then a World Vision staff member asked her to consider how she could use that guilt as motivation to provide for those in need. She and other women were challenged to give sacrificially—and an idea took hold of Loula.

“I decided to give up smoking and redirect the money I spent on cigarettes to World Vision,” she says. To hold herself to this promise, she signed up to run the Chicago Marathon with Team World Vision, raising money for clean water as she trained.

“You can’t run a marathon and smoke at the same time,” she laughs. She recalls some revelations from God during the training process. One day she went on a run and didn’t take any water. Thirst overwhelmed her. “That just kind of cemented [it]—that’s

“

At the end of the day, it’s God that’s really doing the work. He carries you through.”

—LOULA MERKEL

what these people feel. They don’t have water,” Loula says.

She saw running as not just a physical act, but a means of being obedient to God’s leading in her life. Sometimes when she runs, Loula thinks about the children she sponsored through World Vision as a birthday gift to her son.

“I’d never really known what being tired and in pain felt like,” she says. “I think of these kids who feel that all the time, and it’s not optional.”

Loula completed that first marathon, but she wasn’t finished. “I thought, okay, it was a great experience for me,” she says. “I’d like to give other folks the opportunity.” She brought someone from Team World Vision to speak to her church. “I was praying for 10 people [to join Team World Vision] and now we have 60,” she says. “God was already working on people, and I think he would’ve made this happen otherwise. I feel fortunate to have been in the right place at the right time and say yes.”

Loula believes that the important part of the equation is the willingness to say yes, which doesn’t come naturally to her. But she said yes to Women of Vision, to Jesus, and to Team World Vision. This October she’ll complete her sixth Chicago Marathon. “At the end of the day, it’s God that’s really doing the work,” says Loula. “He carries you through.” **WV**

My Sponsorship Story

Shelley McCain | Grain Valley, Missouri



COURTESY SHELLEY MCCAIN

I WAS AT a youth event in Kansas City, and part of the event was presenting sponsorship to the

audience. The person on stage held up a card with a beautiful young lady on it, saying she was older than most of the kids that were available to sponsor. She said if she was not sponsored soon, she would not get sponsored. I felt the Lord say to me, “Get up and go!” The hostess left the stage, and I followed her. I yelled, “I’ll take her!”

I yelled those words over six years ago, and to this day, my family and I still sponsor Fati in Mauritania. We send her family packages a few times a year, and we leap for joy when we get a picture or letter from her in the mail. I’m sure this is the same leap the Lord

does every single time someone accepts him as their Lord and Savior.

We love having Fati as a part of our family. It’s a wonderful lesson to our four children as well, for all of our kids are adopted—and we refer to Fati as “our other adopted daughter, who lives far, far away, but we hold her so close to our hearts.” We feel blessed to be part of the World Vision family. **WV**

SEND US YOUR sponsorship story at editor@worldvision.org and you might appear in an issue of *World Vision* magazine.



EUGENE LEE/WORLD VISION

Dreaming Big, Giving Back

As a sponsored child, she defied expectations. Now, she's helping others do the same.

By Eugene Lee

WHEN FELISA RAMOS VALENCIA, 28, was growing up near Soracachi, Bolivia, her dream of going to college led her to defy traditional expectations for girls in her community and change her own parents' outlook on education.

"For a woman to study in this time, it was basically something that was unheard of. And there was a myth that women could go to school only until fifth grade, and that was it," says Felisa, a former sponsored child who is now a lawyer.

Even now, just 76 percent of high school-age girls in Bolivia are enrolled in school.

"I am the first girl to have ever graduated as a high school student in my school, in my community," she says.

As a sponsored child, Felisa received school supplies and encouragement to pursue her education. Through sponsorship-funded programs, World Vision staff taught her how to talk to her parents about her aspirations.

"After the training that I received, I had the capacity to convince my parents that I was able to continue studying," she says.

Felisa encourages sponsored children to write letters to their sponsors during her workshops.

Just getting an education wasn't enough; she wanted to become a community leader. While in high school, Felisa volunteered as a World Vision health promoter, teaching people in her community better health and sanitation practices. And while attending university, she organized local women to be a voice in their municipality.

With her parents' support and new perspective on the importance of education, Felisa earned an undergraduate law degree—then took a job with World Vision back in Soracachi, bringing her sponsorship story full circle to the organization that helped her follow her dream. Since 2012, she's put her degree to work as facilitator of the Project Against Trafficking of Children and Adolescents—a program that lobbies all levels of government for children's rights and raises awareness against trafficking.

"Now [my parents] are proud that I am a professional," she says.

On a recent day in Soracachi, Felisa led a workshop teaching sponsored children practical steps to guard against trafficking. The children learned that if a stranger approaches them, they should say "no," run and find help, tell someone they trust, and report the person to a city official.

In addition to the trafficking prevention tips, she also encouraged the children to write stories about their lives to their U.S. sponsors.

"We thank God for having World Vision here in this community, because it's a blessing. As a child that has been sponsored in the past, I feel very, very proud of having been one," Felisa says. "I have come to World Vision to give back what I have received.

"I constantly tell my students that they have to, like I did, have a dream and never let go of that dream." **WV**

HELP A CHILD like Felisa pursue her dreams by sponsoring today. Complete and mail the form between pages 16 and 17, or visit wvmag.org/sponsor.

**HOW'D THEY
DO THAT? | 32**

Create a back sling like the ones women use in many countries across the globe.

Delight

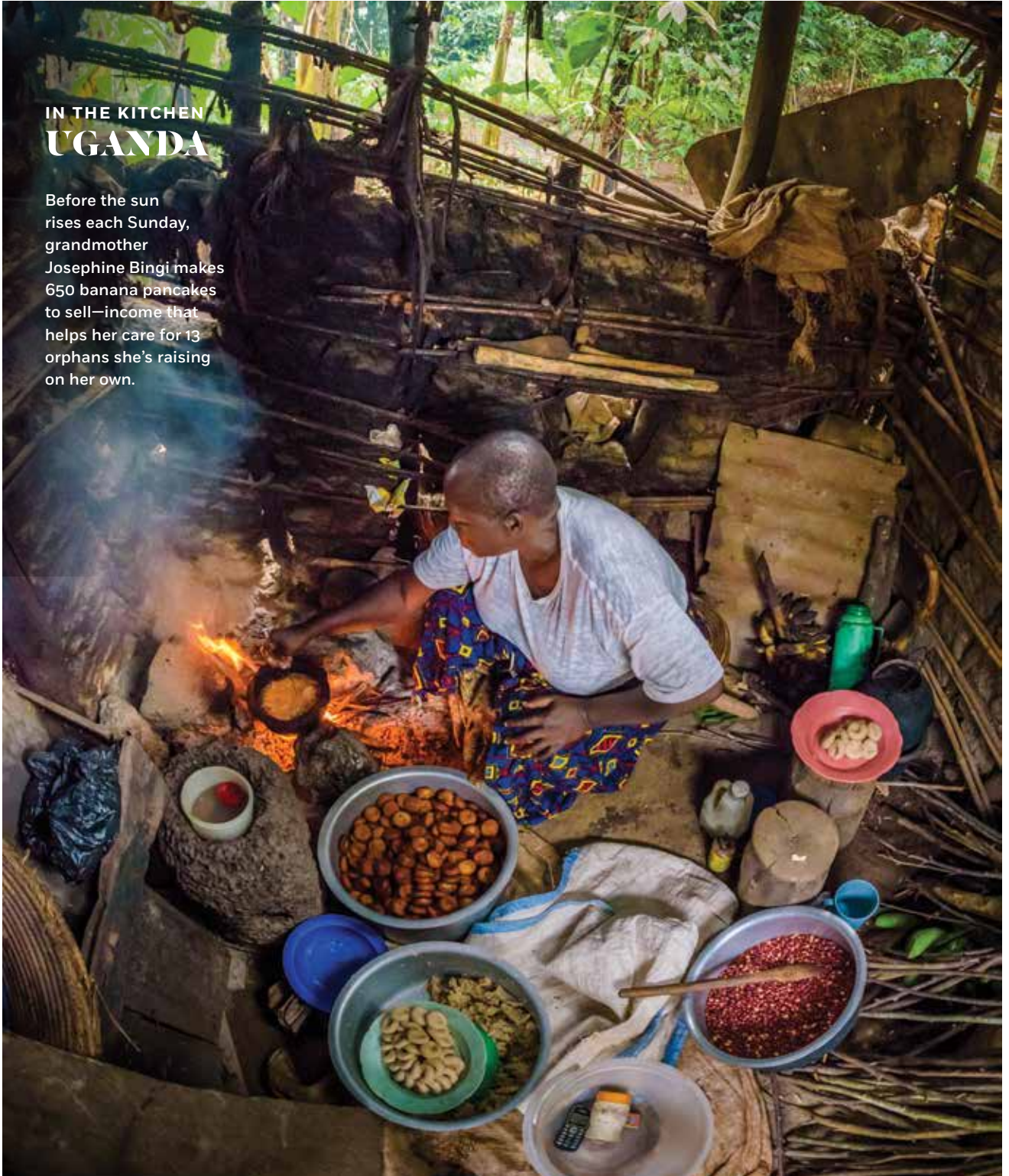
FINDING MEANING IN EVERYDAY MOMENTS

Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them.

—PSALM 111:2

IN THE KITCHEN UGANDA

Before the sun rises each Sunday, grandmother Josephine Bingi makes 650 banana pancakes to sell—income that helps her care for 13 orphans she's raising on her own.



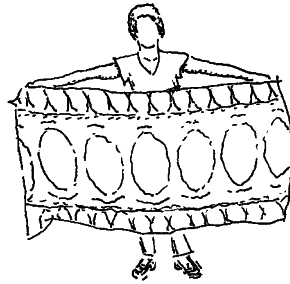
JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

Make a Back Sling

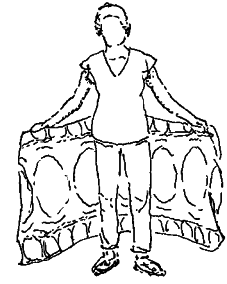
By Elizabeth Hendley

Mothers around the world share many challenges, one of which is how to carry small children while doing other work. From the highlands of Peru and Bolivia to the grasslands of Zambia and Rwanda, moms use a single piece of fabric to create a hands-free baby carrier. Here's how they do it:

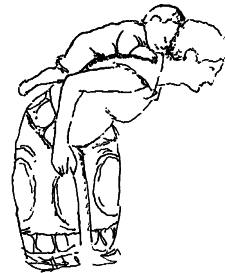
BONUS: You can use this method to carry more than babies. We've seen everything from bushels of wheat to sticks of firewood tied to people's backs using the same technique.



STEP 1 / Find a rectangular piece of material; the long edge should be about as wide as your arm span.



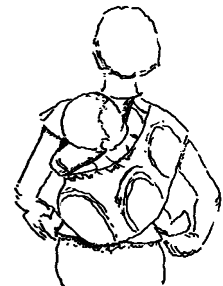
STEP 2 / With the cloth behind you, hold it at your waist like you're going to wrap it around to wear as a skirt.



STEP 3 / Lean over so your torso is parallel to the ground, place the baby face-down on your back, and grab the ends of the cloth.




STEP 4 / Slide the cloth up, covering the baby's bottom and back. Leave the baby's legs free.



STEP 5 / Put the right side of the cloth over your right shoulder. The left side goes under your left arm.



STEP 6 / Tie the ends together across your chest. 



EUGENE LEE/WORLD VISION

ASHLEY WALTON/JOURNEY GROUP



Kenya

SHOUT OUT HIS name the way Cheru and other kids do every time they see him zoom by—“ABOOO!”

Abu (his real name is Abraham Lokilimak) is a driver for World Vision, but like many of our field staff, he does much more. I joked with Abu that he should have six desks in the office. An obvious one for transport, his official job. Another for IT solutions: I listened to him advise others on the most efficient formats for email attachments. Yet another for translation services: Abu speaks at least three languages fluently. Add community development: Abu is deeply involved in programs to make children’s lives better. And don’t forget guest relations, where he really shines.

Abu drove us down an impossibly bumpy road to Cheru’s house the second day we came to film her walk for water. I had my Nikon D810 and 70-200mm lens ready as soon as I got out of the car, in time to witness Abu’s happy reunion with Cheru in one of the rare moments she smiled. His gentle affection for Cheru didn’t stop there. When she got tired on the long, hot walk for water, Abu hoisted her onto his shoulders and carried her kettle.

With a great big smile, Abu said, “The children love me.” Not just the kids. I love him, too!

*Editor’s note: Cheru’s story was featured in our Spring 2017 issue. See more online—including pictures of her walk for water and a video clip of the road Abu drives to reach her—at wvmag.org/cheru. **WV***

Written and
photographed by
Jon Warren

Nikon D810 camera

70-200mm lens,
1/800th at f/5.0,
250 ISO

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