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power of belief

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WOMAN INSPIRES  
HUNDREDS OF  
FARMERS IN KENYA

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A U.S. BOY'S PASSION NOW  
SAVES LIVES IN ZAMBIA



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## ON THE COVER

Mahana, 9, has an undimmed spark of joy within her, despite her family's hardships.  
JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

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## EXPLORING OUR WORK

Each icon below corresponds to an area of World Vision's work. Use these to guide you topically as you explore this issue.

- Child protection
- Child sponsorship
- Christian faith
- Clean water
- Disability inclusion
- Economic empowerment
- Education
- Emergency response
- Gender equality
- Health
- Hunger and food security
- Poverty in America
- Prayer
- Refugees

"He took the time to tell me that he believed in me. And I think that those words of 'I believe in you' are going to change people."

—Austin Gutwein



# How a garden grows

By Edgar Sandoval Sr.

**IN THE GOLDEN HOURS** of late afternoon, the bright red tomatoes in my garden are big, heavy, and delicious. I relish watering and weeding my plants and watching tomatoes appear and ripen on the vine.

In the quiet of my garden, I often think about biblical references to planting and sowing. The harvest metaphor has been helpful for me in understanding how God uses World Vision to bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ around the world. You might see some parallels in your own life.

People freely choosing a lifelong commitment to Christ is an outcome—or harvest—we pray for. But much careful work goes into the preparation and planting before the reaping. We witness by life, deed, word, and sign—never putting any conditions on the aid we provide—in full confidence that the Lord is working through us for a bountiful harvest in His timing. We want fullness of life for every child, and that includes seeing those beautiful kids in heaven.

In some places, we can quantify the harvest. The countries where Christians can proclaim the gospel freely are like well-tilled, irrigated fields of rich soil where seedlings can grow by the power of the Holy Spirit, thanks to the work of local churches, missionaries, and organizations like ours over

Farmers in Kenya proudly display their tomato harvest. Grants and sponsorship-funded programs are supporting hundreds of farmers and creating resiliency during drought.



**Edgar Sandoval Sr.** is president and CEO of World Vision.

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[@EdgarASandovalSr](#)

many years. In these places, World Vision supports Christian discipleship for children by helping to train and equip local ministries.

In other places we work, we may not be able to measure the harvest in the same way, but we know the fields we've planted, the workers we've equipped with tools, and the seeds sown. Each year, World Vision trains thousands of pastors, youth workers, and other Christian faith leaders around the world. Our Biblical Empowered Worldview, Channels of Hope, and Celebrating Families trainings integrate biblical values into programs that empower people to see themselves as created and loved by God, with the agency needed to address and overcome the issues that keep them in poverty.

The result of this work—the hopeful future harvest—are the 3.5 million children each year since 2015 who have been reached through spiritual nurture activities that strengthen their faith and help them learn about God's love for them.

Jesus also calls World Vision to join Him in places where gospel proclamation is restricted, and sometimes against the law. We're privileged to serve here as perhaps the only Christians people will know. These are places where we trust God to guide His people in the sensitive work of removing stones or sprinkling water so that the planting can begin. Our staff witness through their lives and their commitment to love and serve all people, of any faith or none. We've seen many times that this approach provokes the question to which Jesus is the answer.

I wish that I could see the fruit of these efforts the way I delight in my tomatoes. But I trust God is working at the roots, restoring broken relationships around the world. And as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:7, "neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow."

As the Lord's co-workers, we faithfully employ all our tools—our words, yes, but also our actions, how we live, and the miracles of God we celebrate—and we trust Him for a bountiful harvest at just the right time. 🍅



Whether you turn to  
the right or to the left,  
your ears will hear a voice  
behind you, saying, "This is  
the way; walk in it."  
—ISAIAH 30:21

# Embark

COME IN AND SEE THE WORLD

Travel the globe virtually  
this spring by seeing more  
beautiful photo stories  
from World Vision's work  
around the world at  
[wvmag.org/photos](http://wvmag.org/photos).

## Moldova

Orthodox Easter services  
begin around 10 p.m.  
Saturday night and continue  
into pre-dawn hours on  
Easter morning. At Saint  
Dumitru Church in Chişinău,  
Moldova, hundreds of people  
arrive with food baskets—  
waiting for the priests to  
bless them.

People at the church  
donate part of their offerings  
to a specific charity. This  
year they gave to refugees  
from Ukraine. World Vision  
works closely with local  
churches and community  
organizations in our Ukraine  
crisis response.



**SCAN THE CODE**  
to see more photos  
from the service.

LAURA REINHARDT/WORLD VISION





## ● Embark



### Syria

A powerful 7.8 magnitude earthquake devastated southeast Turkey (officially the Republic of Türkiye) and northwest Syria on February 6, 2023, with considerable aftershocks that caused mass destruction and killed more than 47,000 people across the region. Two weeks later, on February 20, a new 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck the area. Hitting in one of the coldest months of the year, hundreds of thousands have been displaced without adequate shelter, all against the backdrop of a 12-year conflict in Syria.

World Vision teams launched emergency response efforts as soon as the initial earthquake hit. Fuel provided to medical facilities and search and rescue teams helped enable operations to continue and the wounded to get care. Heaters and fuel distributed in emergency shelters helped keep families warm amid freezing temperatures.

As the earthquake's toll could last generations, World Vision relief efforts continue. We are working alongside 15 local organizations to maximize our impact.



*IN THE FIRST THREE  
WEEKS AFTER THE  
INITIAL EARTHQUAKE  
WORLD VISION PROVIDED  
PEOPLE WITH*

**12,753**

*MEALS ALONG WITH  
HEATERS AND FUEL TO*

**2,847**

*DISPLACED HOUSEHOLDS*

WORLD VISION SYRIA RESPONSE TEAM







## ● Embark

*SPONSORS IN THE  
UNITED STATES SUPPORT  
MORE THAN*

**17,000**

*CHILDREN IN COLOMBIA.*



## Colombia

Orel, 13, back left, and her three sisters are all sponsored children. They and their family live near Bogotá. Among the various opportunities they've accessed through World Vision sponsorship, the sisters—Dulce, 11, back right, Juanita, 6, front right, and Kalel, 8, front left—have participated in a World Vision-led community dance group. Here, they demonstrate the cumbia, a traditional dance from Barranquilla.

By her own account, Orel used to be reserved and shy, staying inside most of the time. But over the years, as she has become involved in the dance group and an ecology group, her life has changed a lot, she says. Sponsorship has provided her opportunities to learn new skills, like dance, make good friends through participation in social gatherings, and also learn how to care and advocate for the natural environment.

CHRIS HUBER/WORLD VISION









## ● Embark



### SCAN THE CODE

to get the full story  
from Kentucky and  
see more photos.



## United States

World Vision works through local churches and community organizations to equip vulnerable families with resources they need. Following natural disasters—like the 2021 Kentucky tornadoes—that can look like supplying construction materials and working with families to rebuild (top). And because of generous corporate donations, World Vision can reach out to people who need a helping hand, like single mom Jayla in Newcastle, Pennsylvania (bottom). The gift of new furniture helped her create a cozy space where her family can spend time together.



IN 2022, WORLD VISION SERVED

# 3.59 million

PEOPLE THROUGH OUR WORK IN  
THE UNITED STATES.



## AN URGENT CRISIS

See our update on page 10 about the global hunger crisis and how it's affecting children and families.

# Discover

EXPLORE THE ISSUES FACING PEOPLE IN POVERTY

A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.

—PROVERBS 11:25

## Romania

World Vision social worker Cătălin Romanescu plays with 2-year-old Dima outside World Vision's child-safe play area in Huși, Romania. Buses carried weary refugees from Ukraine—mostly women and children—to seek shelter in other countries in Europe as war raged at home.



LAURA REINHARDT/WORLD VISION

**THE WORLD FACES** one of the most cruel and devastating crises of our time: Hunger. Soaring food prices driven by the war in Ukraine, persistent drought and other extreme weather events, and the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have escalated extreme hunger worldwide.

Today, nearly 45 million people in 37 countries are at risk of starvation. Due to a lack of adequate nutrition, 22 million children are suffering from wasting—severe weight loss that can lead to death if not treated. This number is equal to the combined populations of New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Phoenix, and Philadelphia.

A humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding in the Horn of Africa: Across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia,

nearly 4.9 million girls and boys are acutely malnourished in drought-affected areas and need urgent care.

In Somalia alone, about 6.7 million people will likely face acute food insecurity, and experts predict famine in two districts, Baidoa and Burhakaba—where at least 300,000 people are already living with “catastrophic” levels of food insecurity.

Hunger has exacted a heavy toll on women and children in Baidoa. According to a doctor at Bay Regional Hospital, which offers free medical care to Somalis experiencing severe malnutrition, one to two children are dying daily. Children who recover from malnutrition continue to receive outpatient services, including through World Vision–supported therapeutic

Women walk past a carcass in the parched landscape of Turkana, Kenya.

MARTIN MULUKA/WORLD VISION



GLOBAL HUNGER CRISIS

BY SEVIL OMER

# Famine closes in





clinics and mobile health and nutrition outreach programs.

“When the children are hungry, they will start crying, asking for food and will not stop. When I have water, I give [it to] them to stop crying but it will be ... a moment before they start again, demanding for food,” says Hawa, a 30-year-old mother living in an internal displacement camp in Baidoa.

But it’s not just Africa. Hunger has also gripped Afghanistan, Haiti, Myanmar, and Yemen, where millions of people are already experiencing famine-like conditions.

Food insecurity is spiking in Central America. Two deadly hurricanes in 2020—Eta and Iota—devastated an already vulnerable situation in the region.

In Copán Ruinas, Honduras, farmers like Rony Vásquez face

challenging conditions with failed crops due to excessive rains and the inability to pay for fertilizer. “The truth is that this year we are not going to be able to harvest anything,” says Rony. For his children, including 7-year-old Andrea, that means missing nutritious meals.

In response to the global hunger crisis, World Vision launched our largest humanitarian undertaking ever in April 2022.

We’re working to reach 22 million people with life-saving aid in 26 of the hardest-hit countries: Afghanistan, Angola, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Kenya, Lebanon, Mali, Mauritania, Myanmar, Niger, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South

Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Uganda, Venezuela, and Yemen.

As of January 31, 2023, we’ve supported more than 18.7 million children and adults in affected countries with the essentials they need to survive.

“If we move by faith and share the little we have, the grace of God will engulf the effort,” says Gwayi Patrick, an emergency communications specialist for World Vision in Somalia. “God does not despise our imperfect efforts or see them as insignificant. He works collaboratively, by taking our gifts—and blessing them to increase.” +



Hunger has a name: **SCAN THE CODE** to read the stories behind the hunger headlines.



**Join us in praying that God will protect and provide for children and communities facing hunger worldwide.**

*Almighty God, You are our sustainer, especially in the most challenging times. We pray for You to give the hungry their daily bread (Matthew 6:11) and end their persistent hunger. We ask You to restore health, well-being, and livelihoods. We know no emergency or crisis is too much for You to relieve.*









By Kari Costanza Photos by Jon Warren



# Pure joy

**DWELLS IN A LITTLE YELLOW HOUSE** near the shores of Lake Victoria in western Kenya. Outside, birds chirp—a cheery soundtrack for the day. Beneath the shade of a mango tree, a small table is set for the guests who often stop by, walking or traveling by motorbike. Green dominates, with kale plants stretching skyward in six-tiered, cone-shaped gardens. In the two fishponds abutting the house, tilapia swim to the surface, opening their mouths in small o's, looking for breakfast. Inside, comfort reigns—living room couches upholstered in a deep red that complements a floor of Delft-blue-and-white tile. Lacy white curtains cover arched doorways that lead to a small bedroom and kitchen. And in the dining room, an enchanting sight: 300 newly hatched baby chicks snuggling like puppies on a bed of sawdust.

When Damaris learned that Phoebe had to drop out of school due to pregnancy at age 12, she took her in to teach her the farming and business skills she will need to thrive.

This is Damaris's house. A place of peace and productivity. On this farm in Katito, she has everything she needs. "I only buy salt," she proclaims with a radiant smile. In practicing World Vision's Biblical Empowered Worldview, Damaris has learned the secret to living a full life. And she isn't keeping it to herself. She's sharing it with others.

## A COMMUNITY IN NEED

*Joy* was absent when Damaris moved from Kenya's bustling capital, Nairobi, to rural Katito in 1999, making a solemn journey with her 12-year-old son, Edwin. "I came back here to bury my husband," she says. Japhet, a military man, had died after a trip outside the country. "It was a surprise," she says. "I never found out why." Japhet was from Katito and was of the Luo tribe. Following Luo tradition, Damaris brought her husband's body to his Katito home to be buried on September 25, 1999, and she decided to stay there, living with her son on the small plot of land Japhet had left. Then, more heartbreak.







Edwin died on October 12. “He was so close to his father,” says Damaris. “It was as if the shock killed him.” Damaris was left with nothing but a small plot of land and an empty heart.

She wasn’t alone in her misery. Katito was a place that brimmed with grief. In 2003, World Vision started a child sponsorship program to counter the troubles. The first project manager, Obadiah Kisang, says Katito faced numerous challenges. Drinkable water and jobs were scarce, school enrollment was low, cattle rustling was a menace, and HIV was prevalent.

“There were many child-headed households as a result of losing parents to the disease,” Obadiah says. “Children faced many risks, which included domestic violence, rape, school dropouts, contracting HIV and AIDS, early pregnancy, drug abuse, and alcoholism.” The river Nyando flooded every year. “This created immense suffering for the people, leading to abject poverty and misery,” he says. “In some instances, the children would not even celebrate Christmas because the area would be flooding on a Christmas day.”

When World Vision partners with a community, development workers gather community members

to identify their biggest challenges and together devise a 15- to 20-year plan, funded by child sponsorship, to tackle those issues. “Priorities were water, HIV and AIDS, education, and livelihoods,” says Obadiah.

There was much to do. Parents battled the stigma of HIV and AIDS. They needed medical care and jobs. World Vision worked through faith leaders to encourage support groups, creating a way forward for people living with HIV. Children needed to be in school. World Vision provided school fees and built shelters for children with dilapidated homes. The land was dry and barren. World Vision encouraged people to plant trees.

Sponsors from the United States showered children with love. In Katito, nearly 3,000 children are sponsored—1 of every 10 kids. “The sponsors were very supportive,” says Obadiah. “They wrote letters to the children with words of encouragement and challenge, visited, sent gifts, wrote Christmas cards,



**ABOVE:** Two decades ago, when World Vision started community development in Katito, Kenya, many children had no parents and lived on their own, had only one parent, or stayed with a grandparent due to the prevalence of HIV and AIDS.

**TOP:** Because of her training in Biblical Empowered Worldview, Damaris can grow everything she needs on her thriving farm.





Damaris, left, and World Vision's Alice Yugi feed Damaris's first goat, which she named Alice after the woman who believed in her potential.

and sent [extra gifts] both for family and community." Government grants supported the construction and rehabilitation of water points. It was an all-hands-on-deck effort.

## THE BEGINNING OF CHANGE

*Joy* took root when Damaris built a small house and planted two mango trees in her yard. She planted them for shade, not even considering that they might bear fruit someday. Someday was too far away. Damaris lived day-to-day, working for a local politician and drumming up support from community members. But she found no joy in her work. At the end of the day, she would arrive home, sad and lonely.

In 2016, Alice changed that.

World Vision's Alice Yugi, 55, was screening potential candidates for an innovative program called Biblical Empowered Worldview. Developed in Kenya and Tanzania, the premise of Biblical Empowered Worldview is simple. For a week, trainers explain two things to a class filled with faith leaders, local leaders,

youth, and smallholder farmers: that they are loved by and made in the image of God, and that they can feel empowered to succeed rather than fail.

At a meeting called at a church by the area chief, Samson Alosi, 58, Damaris was chosen to represent the farmers. She wanted to refuse, she says, "but the chief said no." Still, Damaris hesitated to participate.

Alice wouldn't let go. She would travel to Damaris's house early each morning and wait outside to take her to class. Alice saw something special in Damaris. "I pursued her because most farmers are men," she says. "Women think differently. In modern farming, we want people to care. I could sense energy in her. And passion." And there was something else. Alice told Damaris that she believed in her. "When you get to know that someone believes in you, you are motivated. Belief is the ingredient you lack," Damaris says.

Alice trained Damaris and 38 other community members in Biblical Empowered Worldview, pushing back against the lies that people had told themselves and each other for decades in Katito.



“They believe they are destined to be poor,” says Alice, who grew up in the region. “Some of this has come as a result of what they have been told by their forefathers, the leaders.”

The Biblical Empowered Worldview curriculum answers practical questions, says Alice, such as, “How do I cope? How do I take care of my farm?” But the spiritual discussions change hearts. Alice witnesses “lightbulb moments.” She uses the story of Moses. “When Moses was moving with the Israelites and came to the Red Sea, God said, ‘What do you have in your hand?’ Moses said, ‘I have a stick.’ And that is what he used.” Alice watches people realize that, like Moses, they have all the tools they need to succeed. On the last day of class, participants create an action plan that they promise to uphold. And to get every student started, she gives them three chicks.

### THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF BELIEF

*Joy* multiplied for Damaris, as did those baby chicks. “I used a mosquito net to fence them in. I put my three birds under the net,” she says. “They started laying.” Three chicks turned

into 30 chickens. “My farm was now growing,” she says. Damaris would walk into the bush to cut down trees to build a structure for her chickens. Now there were 100. She roofed the chicken coop with iron sheets. One hundred chickens became 600 chickens. She added the fishponds, goats, and honeybees, and she expanded the farm. “When I started enjoying the money, I started to see what Alice was saying,” she says. Damaris could do whatever she put her mind to. “It was a message that God was passing through Alice.”

Damaris passed the message on to her neighbors. “Alice believed in me, and I believed in others,” she says. She taught Caren to raise chickens. Caren Adhiambo Ongweya, 47, the mother of seven children, now has 50 chickens of her own, and Damaris is her mentor. “She chose me from her heart,” says Caren, who has trained 30 other community members to raise chickens. It’s the ripple effect of belief.

On a Thursday morning in October 2022, Felix Oluoch, 25, and Antonio Okoth, 28, stopped by Damaris’s to talk farming, sitting in two of the blue plastic chairs under the mango trees. “I had a miserable life,” says Felix. “After graduating I couldn’t get

After his father died, Felix lived in an orphanage until World Vision started sponsorship in Katito. Having the support of a child sponsor enabled him to come back home. Now Damaris is teaching him to farm to ensure he keeps moving forward in life.





The children of Katito, including Caren's granddaughter, join hands for a late afternoon dance. Because of decades of World Vision's child sponsorship activities in Katito, kids now have freedom to play.

a job.” Felix had it rough from childhood. His father died in 2004 and he was sent to an orphanage in Kisumu, an hour away from Katito. Life in the orphanage was difficult and could be violent.

When sponsorship came to Katito, Felix was able to move back home and live with his mother and siblings. He credits his sponsor from Tennessee with getting him through school, providing school uniforms, and writing encouraging letters. “He kept telling me to soldier on and never lose hope,” says Felix. Felix’s mother spent her savings to put Felix through college in Kisumu, but when he graduated, all the jobs in his chosen profession, public health, were filled. He reached out to Damaris. Now he farms kale and spinach and raises chickens.

Antonio has a similar story. He was a teacher in Katito but couldn’t afford to raise a family on a teacher’s salary. A beginning teacher in Kenya earns US\$285 per year. “When I started with Tony, he had nothing,” says Damaris. “I gave him a guinea fowl and three birds.” To see Tony’s farm today is to

witness how he turned nothing into everything. He has a fishpond with nearly 3,000 tilapia, 15 cattle, four donkeys, numerous goats, guinea fowl, fantail doves, and a forest of eucalyptus that he could sell for 10 million Kenyan shillings, or about US\$80,000. But he won’t sell them. “I like them,” he says of his trees. It’s where he goes to meditate.

“Through [Biblical] Empowered Worldview,” he says, “I learned that I am created in God’s image. I am now co-creating.” He wakes up early every morning, as Damaris does, to pray and start the day while his wife and two children are still sleeping. “I am at peace. Peace with my soul. Peace with the environment.”

Both he and Felix are passing on their knowledge to young farmers. “This doesn’t just happen when you believe in yourself, but when others believe in you,” says Antonio. Damaris beams at the two young men sitting under her mango trees. “These are my God-given sons. God has given me two instead of one,” she says, thinking of Edwin, who died so many years ago. Now the memory brings a smile.





Phoebe Anyango, 17, brings tea made with goat's milk for Felix and Antonio. Phoebe is living with Damaris, learning to farm. She dropped out of school when she became pregnant at age 12. Phoebe loved school. "I wanted to be an astronomer," she says. "I liked the stars." She'd stare up at the night sky, unpolluted by city lights, and watch stars shoot through the sky. "In the dark hours," she says, "I would reflect on what the teachers taught us. How the sun worked." Early pregnancy snuffed out Phoebe's dreams. "I was praying that I could do something that could transform my life and the lives of my sister and brothers," says Phoebe.

She was working as a maid when Damaris learned about her situation and became an answer to prayer.

Not only is Damaris teaching Phoebe farming and how to raise goats, chickens, and fish, but she is also working with the government to get Phoebe an identification card, something she needs to start a bank account. Most of the 1 billion people around the world who lack identification are like Phoebe—female and poor. Damaris's belief in Phoebe is giving her hope again. "I feel when I wake up in the morning, whatever I am doing will change my life tomorrow," Phoebe says.

## EMPOWERED FOR SUCCESS

*Joy* is renewed every morning at Damaris's house, where she starts her days at 3:30 a.m. with devotions and prayer. She tends the chickens after prayer. There are thousands to feed. "From three birds I have 2,200 birds," she says. She feeds and waters the goats, singing to them, especially her favorite, named Alice after the woman who believed in her. "When I sing to them, they listen," she says. "They concentrate on the music and the milk flows." The fish come next. The ponds in the front contain hundreds of fingerlings that need to be fed, and the pond in the back holds 5,000.

Before a late breakfast, she'll water her vegetables—some in cone gardens she built herself, other crops surrounding the house in an avalanche of green. After breakfast, she'll spend more time in the garden, feed the chickens and the goats again, and, of course, pause to chat with the visitors who stop by to find out



the secrets to her farming that she readily shares. To date, more than 500 farms have been established in Katito and beyond because of Damaris.

One farm belongs to Samson, the chief who thought Damaris would make a good farmer. Like Damaris, he took Biblical Empowered Worldview training from Alice. Samson is in his 23rd year as chief of Katito, and he has watched the community change. "World Vision has been one of a kind compared to others," he says. "Sponsors are touched by God." In two years, Samson will retire to his farm. He feels the community is ready for him to leave and for World Vision to move to a new community. "The much they have done will remain with us," he says. "It's sustainable." Alice agrees. "With a little more time, this community will be purely transformed," she says.

And as for Damaris? She reflects. "I know that God will lead me," she says, suddenly quiet. But an instant later, her exuberance is back, and she grins. "I'd like to raise pigs!" This is Damaris. Made in the image of God, believing in others, and living with joy. 🙌

*Lilian Odhiambo and Quinter Muga of World Vision's Kenya staff contributed to this article.*

When Damaris met Caren five years ago, she was struggling. After Damaris taught her to raise chickens, she was able to put her older children through college.

**Help empower families with Biblical Empowered Worldview training. Give to the Economic Empowerment Fund using the envelope between pages 18 and 19, online at [wvmag.org/Damaris](http://wvmag.org/Damaris), or by calling 1.866.332.4453.**



# An “I believe

In 2009, Austin visited countries in southern Africa. That trip included a stop in Zambia to see his Hoops of Hope–funded clinics that World Vision built.

ANDREA PEER/WORLD VISION



# “We in you”

can change lives



By Tigana Chileshe  
and Laura Reinhardt

PHOTOS BY TIGANA CHILESHE  
EXCEPT WHERE NOTED



## • Discover

# On

**WORLD AIDS DAY**, December 1, 2004, a 10-year-old Arizona boy named Austin Gutwein woke up early and headed to his school's gym before 6 a.m. His goal: to raise a dollar for each of the 2,057 free throws he'd shoot that day. Why 2,057? That was how many children would be orphaned by AIDS during his school day—one every 14 seconds.

To understand how Austin got to that school gym, we have to go back to the year before to learn about someone who believed a child could make a difference. The ripples from that belief continue to expand today.

In the early 2000s, World Vision was working to raise awareness of the multi-generational toll HIV and AIDS was taking in Africa and its devastating effects on children. We commissioned a study through the Barna Research Group that showed that only 3% of Christians said they would definitely donate money to help children orphaned by AIDS. World Vision began focusing on eliminating the stigma surrounding AIDS to motivate people to provide care for those affected by this disease. We sent DVDs to donors with the story of Maggie, who'd lost her parents to AIDS and now lived with her great-grandmother.

Austin and his family watched that video. While Austin's parents were moved, Austin—who was 9 years old at the time—was devastated.

**TOP:** Community health worker Joyce Muyanda (right) laughs with one of her clients, Cecelia. They're both HIV positive. Joyce believes that disclosing her HIV status helps people open up to her. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Portrait of Austin Gutwein today. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Orphaned Maggie and her great-grandmother Finedia Kunda, whose story moved Austin to help.



JON WARREN/WORLD VISION 2004





## Global impact fact

**World Vision has trained about 184,000 community health workers around the world.**

“I’ll never forget just watching people being lowered into graves,” he says. “I couldn’t shake that there [were] people and there were kids who are growing up without their parents, without their grandparents because of a disease.”

Austin knew that he wanted to do something, but he didn’t know what. His parents called World Vision. “I think that my parents wanted to talk to World Vision because after all it was their fault that they now had a 9-year-old who was just going crazy trying to figure out what we can do to help,” says Austin.

### A LIFE-CHANGING PHONE CALL

The receptionist at World Vision connected Austin with a veteran staff member, Dana Buck, who, as a longtime youth leader, was known to be great with kids.

Dana asked Austin simple questions about himself, about the video, and about what he liked to do. Austin told Dana he liked playing basketball. Then Dana asked, “How can you use it to go help?”

“[Now], at 27, I see how impactful that was,” says Austin. “That forever changed my life. And I believe that it changed [the] lives of many others too.”

Austin is right. In fact, that 30-minute phone call changed thousands of lives—and is still changing them today.

### A COMMUNITY IN CRISIS

Around the world from Arizona, the AIDS crisis was devastating the community of Sinazongwe, Zambia.

Sinazongwe is famous for its mountainous terrain and tasty fish from Lake Kariba. But the high prevalence of HIV and AIDS was overshadowing its beauty.

The disease had nearly wiped out multiple generations, leaving countless orphans and limiting parents’ abilities to provide for their families by taking away

their health. And it brought incredible shame because the disease was transmitted sexually.

People would grow ill but not seek medical treatment for fear that they would be diagnosed with HIV. They chose death rather than risk their status being revealed.

“In the beginning, there was so much stigma here. The stigma weighed on you like a heavy rock, leaving no room to breathe,” says 52-year-old Joyce Muyanda, an HIV-positive community health worker who has lived in Sinazongwe for 27 years. “So many people lived with the disease in secret, never seeking help, and died prematurely.”

But change was coming—one free throw at a time.

### CONTINUING TO SERVE

On that December day in Arizona, Austin achieved his goal of making 2,057 baskets from the free-throw line. He’d raised more than \$3,000. But he wasn’t ready to quit. He wanted to get other kids involved.

“I’ve read the Bible enough times to see a God who desperately wants to include His people in that story,” says Austin.

He and his family founded a nonprofit called Hoops of Hope, inviting individual kids and teams to fundraise by shooting free throws. A few years later, while still a teenager, Austin would also write two books about his experiences.

“There were so many other people and so many other teenagers who had that belief too, that we can go out and we can do something,” says Austin. “We don’t have to wait to be adults to have an impact on the world.”

What started with one boy quickly grew. At its height, Hoops of Hope had 40,000 participants. Events were wild. “There were 100 basketballs flying in any direction,” says Austin. “If you didn’t get hit by a basketball you probably weren’t in the building.”

For the kids, who often didn’t have their own money to donate, spending a day shooting baskets cost them physically. They knew they’d sacrificed to make a difference—and it felt good.



LAURA REINHARDT/WORLD VISION



# I'VE READ THE BIBLE ENOUGH TIMES TO SEE A God WHO DES

## A NEW DAY IN SINAZONGWE

Knowing an HIV patient's CD4 cell count is critical in administering medication, but for years the closest machine that could measure it was in Maamba, just over 20 miles from Sinazongwe. Many people lacked the funds or the physical ability to travel even this distance.

In 2009, World Vision constructed a clinic that, for the first time, provided the people of Sinazongwe with an antiretroviral therapy (ART) center and a lab fully equipped with a machine that tests CD4. "The CD4 machine has reduced the distance made to the next town, which has the only other machine," says Joyce. "[It saves] money and time, especially when you are not feeling very well. This is one of the blessings of the facility provided by World Vision." The clinic helped bring life back to the community.

The source of the funding was Austin and Hoops of Hope.

A 15-year-old Austin and his dad traveled to Sinazongwe for the clinic dedication. "I don't think I fully grasped, when

I was first there, the impact that clinic would have," says Austin. "To hear about these people who were able to go in and in a single day be able to go get tested, to go get treated, to go get counseled. ... It completely changed that community."

He reflects on the benefit of the counseling both before and after people received their diagnosis. The staff would explain why getting tested mattered for the patient, for their children, and for their community.

"I think it goes back to this concept of believing in people," Austin says. "People hear the message, '[Your life] has purpose. It has value—no matter what [your] status is, whether or not you have this disease.'"

He met caregivers in Sinazongwe and marveled at their dedication. These volunteers, some of whom were HIV-positive themselves, had dedicated their lives to caring for people with HIV and AIDS—many of them cycling long distances to minister to the people under their care. Some of the funds raised

through Hoops of Hope events went to support the caregivers with resources like sturdy bicycles and desperately needed supplies.

"I'm just blown away by [these] people who hop on a bicycle and go," says Austin. "They'll bike for an hour to go meet with somebody, to go pray with somebody, go talk to somebody who's dying. And they're doing it out of just the goodness of their soul."

Joyce remembers being equally impressed with Austin.

She says, "I was so amazed that such a young person would do so much good in Sinazongwe. I remember him very well. I remember thinking that when he grows up, he was going to do so many great things because he had a heart of helping others."

## EQUIPPING CAREGIVERS

Joyce is a well-known and respected figure in her community. A World Vision-trained community health worker who's passionate about her work, she's dedicated to helping her community thrive and prosper despite all odds.

"If I was not helping people as I do, I would be empty; I would be very sad," she says.

"People come to me because they know they can trust me. They believe me when I tell them they can get help and overcome the disease."

Disclosing her own HIV status helped Joyce build trust with people in the community—breaking barriers and overcoming the stigma attached to the virus. "Because of my experience and what I have been through, people feel free to open up to me, and I know this helps a lot," Joyce says.

As a caregiver, Joyce worked with many families. She visited them regularly to help them make good choices about nutrition, to provide advice for living with HIV, and to connect them with medical



Community members can have routine blood screenings locally thanks to the CD4 testing machine donated by Hoops of Hope through World Vision.



# PERATELY WANTS TO INCLUDE HIS people IN THAT STORY.

support when needed. But whenever she visited, before anything else, she prayed with them. As she continued to visit families, her relationships often turned from caregiver to friend.

## STRUGGLES IN THE STATES

In 2015, Austin found himself struggling. As Hoops of Hope grew, he sometimes found it difficult to cope with the highs and the lows. Then the number of events slowed down, and people tried to take the concept and use it to fundraise for other causes.

Deciding to bring Hoops of Hope to an end was tough on Austin. But he quickly points out that the demise of an organization pales in comparison to the suffering of people facing illness and death: “When you feel like your life is tough, there’s a lot of people crying out from a hospital bed for the life that you have.”

After his charity ended, Austin says, “[I tried] to find out who I was. [I knew] God had a plan and purpose for my life beyond Hoops of Hope.”

Through it all, Dana Buck of World Vision continued to reach out to the young man, offering advice and, most of all, a listening ear. Austin even interned for a summer with Dana’s team.

Austin says he’d love to stand in the background in heaven watching the line of people form to thank Dana.

“[I’d] love to watch those people that he’s impacted over the years through all those different projects at World Vision,” he says, “but really through those times when he just took a moment and paused ... to stop and pour life into somebody.”

Taking inspiration from Dana’s mentorship of him, Austin began to work as a youth pastor where he could pour into the next generation. He shared the message of God’s love with each one. He let them know he believed that, even in their youth, they had the ability to create change in the world. He was living proof.



The Sinazongwe zonal clinic in Zambia's southern province was built by World Vision with the support of Hoops of Hope in 2009.

## MOVING FORWARD

Joyce continues to care for the most vulnerable and express her belief in the value they bring to the world—just as a little boy from Arizona expressed his belief in a community in turmoil by shooting free throws.

Austin’s work has contributed to a positive trend in Zambia. According to UNAIDS, the annual AIDS-related deaths in Zambia have declined from 32,000 in 2010 to 19,000 in 2021, a decrease of around 30%.

“Funerals are now far between compared to previous years when stigma was high,” says Joyce.

Through the health facility, World Vision has helped reduce stigma and provide many people with education on prevention, treatment, and disease management.

There’s good change in Austin’s life too. Now 27, he’s started down a new road as a police officer. He brings the same belief in others to this new chapter.

“My favorite thing is praying with

people as a police officer,” he says. When he’s driving someone who has been arrested to the station, he uses the time to encourage them with the good he sees in them. “This isn’t the end of your story,” he tells them. And then, if they agree to it, he prays with them.

Austin sees eternal value in those opportunities to pause and take time for others.

“Don’t let those moments pass you by,” he says. “[Dana] took the time to tell me that I could do it. He took the time to tell me that he believed in me. And I think that those words of ‘I believe in you’ are going to change people. And if we tell people that a lot more in this world, it’s amazing what God can do.” 🙏

**Help more children by making a donation to the Child Health & Nutrition Fund through the enclosed envelope between pages 18 and 19, online at [wvmag.org/child-health](http://wvmag.org/child-health), or by calling 1.866.332.4453.**









# TWO SISTERS : TWO WORLDS





THE VILLAGE WELL IS

MAKING NOISES AGAIN.

It's unwelcome news for sisters Firdaoussou, 12, and Mahana, 9. They're hungry and they need water to cook porridge. The two girls are always hungry and thirsty—one of the few things they have in common.

Firdaoussou is bitter. She had the misfortune of being born the first girl. That means she will never go to school. "She's the only one who can help me," says her mother, Aissa, 35, also a first-born daughter. "Because in our culture, girls are the ones who are in charge of doing the housework."

Firdaoussou will live a life of servitude, helping her mother cook and clean. In a few years, she will marry and start her own family. And her firstborn daughter will follow in her dismal footsteps. It is the way of life for the oldest daughter in Niger.

Girls like Mahana, born second, have more options. A bright light shines within Mahana. She can't help but smile. She smiles when she talks about going to school and when she talks about playing with her friends and little brother Razak, 6, especially how they play tag, running and laughing in the hot sun of West Africa.

"I don't play games," says Firdaoussou, whose name means heaven or paradise. "I only help my mother." She sits against the family's hut, curled in a tight ball, nearly swallowed up by her clothing. Birth order has determined her lot in life. And growing up in a place without clean water has made things harder.

## LIFE WITHOUT WATER

It's easy to take clean water for granted if you have it. With a turn of the tap, water for drinking, cooking, and bathing flows. But around the world, 771 million people lack access to clean water. The burden falls primarily on women and girls like Firdaoussou, who walk an average of 6 kilometers a day to haul 40 pounds of water.

The village well in Kulmado, Niger, is about a quarter mile from the



FIRDAOUSSOU

sisters' home—a tall hut made of clay held together by tree branches with a thatched roof that leaks when it rains. All six family members—two sisters, two brothers, and their parents—sleep in the hut's one hot room.

It's hot outside, too—111 degrees today. The World Bank reports that temperatures here are rising 1.5 times faster than in other places in the world. Kulmado is in Dosso Region, in Niger's panhandle. Today the panhandle feels like it was left too long on the stove. Everyone needs water on this scorcher of a day, but no one can get it—because the village well is making noises again.

Three young men stride to the well, resolute, carrying thick canvas ropes. One, sporting the red and blue striped jersey of Messi, the international soccer star from Argentina, affixes a contraption of ropes and straps to the legs of a second young man wearing a harness. The Messi fan and a third man, a hat shielding his head from the blistering sun, lower their courageous friend down into the well. He looks nervous but determined.

After a few minutes, the young man is hoisted back up, his arms encircling a plastic bucket full of muck. The water is filthy—brownish yellow. He plucks out the plastic bags that have danced their way into the well on the wings of Niger's hot afternoon winds, traveling from a nearby market before spiraling down. But there's more.

The reason for all the noise looks up from the bucket: a big brown frog.

## KULMADO BEFORE

Life in Kulmado used to be much easier. Happier. Seventeen years ago, the well was new. It had a cover to keep the dirt and debris out. Frogs couldn't hop inside and lay eggs. But the cover has long since deteriorated.

Back then, the rains came on time. Villagers could depend on the seasons. They planted before the rains came, and crops would grow to feed everyone. "It used to be all green," says Oumarou Moussa, the village chief. "There used to be [greens], carrots, potatoes, radishes, tomatoes, cabbages. It was green



throughout the year. During the rainy season, it was full of vegetables.”

Oumarou, 58, has been chief of Kulmado for seven years. He sits close to his nephew, Boubacar Amadou, 53, under a neem tree, its green leaves smooth and glossy. The men are good friends—and their friendship has endured many tough seasons, like the hardy tree that gives them shade on this hot, dry day. They finish each other’s thoughts. “In those days there used to be a lot of joy here,” says Boubacar. “No one was complaining about poverty. Those days, even if your staple crops weren’t good, you could sell

animals. All the surrounding villages used to come to us to get their vegetables.”

Firdaoussou and Mahana’s mother, Aissa, remembers the garden wistfully. “I remember we used to grow salad there,” she says. “And cabbage. We used to use what we had in the garden and mix it with what we had in the house—cassava—and make meals. Anytime we were hungry, we could just make food and eat.”

Mahana misses the potatoes they used to grow in the garden. Firdaoussou misses green vegetables. Now she mostly eats the millet that her father grows. “It’s not good at all,” she says. The water isn’t good either.



Boubacar, left, and his uncle, Chief Oumarou, discuss village affairs on the dry, sandy ground that was once a flourishing garden.



other things in the market and make food out of it.”

“Now people just come to my house to beg for food,” interjects the chief.

“Now they just think about the old days,” adds Boubacar.

He gestures to a wide swath of land. It stretches from where the men sit under the neem tree to the village well. The land, about the size of a football field, is surrounded by a fence. “It used to be a garden,” he says. “That’s why we built the fence—to protect the garden from

Both girls hate the frogs. If Firdaoussou pulls up a bucket with frogs she immediately dumps the water out. “When I see frogs in the well,” says Mahana, “I am scared and my heart aches.”

### KULMADO TODAY

With the well purged of frogs for now, Mahana, Firdaoussou, and their mother walk through what used to be the garden, now just sand littered with cow dung, a few scattered chicken feathers, and yellowing leaves from the neem trees.

They arrive at the water source and attach a bucket to an old tire wheel. “We are facing many problems because of this water,” says Aissa. “Because the water is dirty, it brings stomach pains, diarrhea, and skin rash. We can see the water is dirty, especially when things fall inside it—plastic bags, leaves, frogs.”

And the water in this well isn’t just filthy, it’s dangerous. One of Firdaoussou’s friends died of bilharzia, caused by tiny worms that contaminate water sources in places like Kulmado and infect people through the skin or through drinking.

The girls let the bucket slide down and pull it up, filled with dirty water but no frogs. Around them, flies buzz. Animals have been here. You can see their tracks and the dung they’ve left behind.

Along with water, the lack of food has become a big issue in Kulmado. “Every day people come to my place,” says Chief Oumarou. “Usually, when they come it is with complaints: ‘The kids haven’t eaten today or yesterday. The kids are crying. I can only give them one bowl of corn or millet.’”

In Kulmado, children have even stopped going to school because they get too hungry. There are 110 children in primary school and eight in high school. Students don’t advance far. Since the school was built in 2003, only two children have reached university, and one dropped out.

Firdaoussou has convinced herself that she would hate school. “All my friends who were enrolled at school have always complained about being hungry there,” she says. But Mahana feels for her sister.

## ● Discover

“It hurts me a lot to see that my sister doesn’t go to school,” she says.

“One cannot study well with hunger,” says Firdaoussou. “One can’t be focused in class with an empty stomach. Most of the children in the community leave school because of hunger. That’s why many of them fail in school.”

Mahana’s teacher, Boubacar Kari, confirms this. “When children don’t have enough food, attendance and the learning is difficult,” says Boubacar. “When they have not eaten at home, they interrupt the lesson and say, ‘Teacher, we are hungry.’ They do not listen to me anymore.”

Hunger is a problem for Mahana at

have helped the family’s income much.

“When I came back, I saw Fataou wasn’t going to school,” says Mustafa. It’s a source of contention between the parents. Aissa allowed Fataou to drop out because he didn’t have a school lunch. “It is difficult to find food,” says Aissa. “It is a public shame if I can’t send them with food.” Now Fataou has even fewer prospects for the future. “My son’s situation worries me,” Mustafa says, “because no father will be happy to see his child sitting without any objective in life.”

Fataou lives in a country ranked third-to-last on the Human Development Index, a metric that measures the

they have moved to neighboring countries in West Africa, such as Ghana and Togo, looking for work. Searching for hope.

## KULMADO IN THE FUTURE

Hope is what’s needed in Kulmado—the hope that comes with clean water. In other communities in Niger, hope is springing forth as World Vision improves access to clean water by drilling new boreholes and restoring water points. In addition to equipping families with water close to home, World Vision is installing water systems at schools and health clinics and providing communities and families with tools to ensure proper hygiene and sanitation practices—reaching over 1.3 million people across the country in the past 15 years.

World Vision recently completed construction of a mechanized water system at a nearby health center that could also provide water to villagers in Kulmado, ending their reliance on the dirty well. Clean water has had a great impact in combating waterborne and sanitation-related diseases, keeping children in school, and helping to alleviate hunger—as clean water works in tandem with nutritious food to prevent malnutrition.

“Clean water would help us keep clean and we would be healthier,” says Mahana. “And we would be happier.” Much happier, she feels, without frogs. Even Firdaoussou brightens at the thought: “If we get clean water, I will rest,” she says, “because I won’t need to go to the well every morning. I will be so happy.” And, perhaps, she could fulfill a dream she holds close: learning to sew and starting a business someday. That dream and a fresh start for everyone in the community could become reality with the gift of clean water. 📌

*Tabita Ali Soumaila of World Vision’s Niger office contributed to this story.*



The mechanized water system World Vision completed in October 2022 at a health clinic in Dosso, Niger, provides clean water to the clinic and to the 4,800 people who live nearby. It is out of reach for Mahana’s family.

school, too. “I am very hungry,” she says. “I get hungry in the morning when I wake up. I feel it in my stomach. Like a pain. I [feel] like there is something turning in my stomach. I try to drink water to fight the hunger in my stomach.”

## CONCERNS FOR FATAOU

The girls’ older brother, Fataou, 14, dropped out of school while his dad was away working in neighboring Benin for much of 2022. Mustafa, 45, took some of the money he raised by farming and bought fabrics and shoes to sell in Benin’s markets. It doesn’t appear to

health of nearly every country globally. Countries with the lowest scores are plagued by widespread poverty, poor education, and limited healthcare. They have low income, high birth rates, and low life expectancies. In Niger, only about half the population has access to clean water.

But perhaps Niger’s biggest challenge is the emergence of terrorism. Once a peaceful country, Niger faces terrorists on every one of its seven borders. Chief Oumarou knows that terrorist groups can become a magnet for young men. So far, he says, none of the young men from Kulmado has joined a terrorist group, but

**Help provide clean water for communities like Mahana’s. See the envelope between pages 18 and 19, go online at [wvmag.org/give-water](https://www.wvmag.org/give-water), or call 1.866.332.4453.**



See what great love the Father  
has lavished on us, that we  
should be called children of  
God! And that is what we are!  
—1 JOHN 3:1

# Inspire

MOTIVATING YOU TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

"The great thing to remember is  
that though our feelings come  
and go, God's love for us  
does not." —C.S. Lewis

## IN THE KITCHEN: Moldovan plăcintă

By Laura Reinhardt



SCAN THE  
CODE

to get the  
recipe.

Plăcintă (pronounced plah-CHEEN-tah) is a traditional Moldovan pastry that offers the warmth of a cozy blanket. It hails from Moldova, Romania, and Ukraine, but is enjoyed by many people across Eastern Europe. In Moldova, where whole restaurants are devoted to it, this dish must feel like a small piece of home for refugees fleeing Ukraine.

Moldovans have opened their country and their homes to refugees despite living in one of the poorest countries in

Europe. Many then downplay their generosity, saying that anyone would help.

This comfort food reflects the hospitality of many Moldovans. The pie comes in varied shapes and with a number of different fillings, cheese being the most common. It's not hard to imagine Moldovan families enjoying plăcintă with their Ukrainian neighbors. That image paints a picture of irrepressible generosity. 🍴



LAURA REINHARDT/WORLD VISION



Grandma Pha loves caring for her grandson while his mother works in a factory. With training from World Vision's Grandmother Inclusive Approach in Cambodia, she and other grandmothers who serve as primary caregivers in their households have learned how to take even better care of their grandchildren through handwashing and preparing nutritious meals—while also receiving support to better care for themselves.

# 4 promises to encourage God's children

By Elisabeth Rickard

**✝** **GOD'S PROMISES TO HIS PEOPLE** throughout the Bible can be anchors when our hearts and minds become busy and burdened. As you meditate on these four promises from our Father to His children, may they remind you of the beautiful realities that are yours in Christ. Let God's words from Romans 8 assure your heart of His unfailing promises to you, no matter your season or circumstances.

*For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. —Romans 8:14–17*



## PROMISE #1

# We belong to God's family

Notice how group-oriented these verses are. Just before this passage, in verse 12, Paul addresses the Roman Christians as “brothers and sisters.” We aren’t brought into God’s family to live isolated or individualistic lives of faith, but ones of mutual growth and edifying belief. God created humans for dynamic connection and relationship, and these are fulfilled and lived out most beautifully within the context of His kingdom family—His Church. In these relationships, we get to continually remind each other of our belonging to God’s family and of His Spirit-guided purposes for our lives.

In a culture that competes with God’s truth for our constant attention, it’s easy to forget our foundational identity as God’s beloved children, isn’t it? That’s why our grounding in the Word and ongoing affirmation of each other are so life-giving and important! Let’s keep encouraging our brothers and sisters: We are children of God, redeemed by Jesus, brought into a new and unshakeable status as citizens of God’s kingdom, on mission together for that kingdom.

## REFLECT

What’s one way you can press deeper into the community of God’s people to emphasize our shared belonging?

## PROMISE #2

# We are freed by Christ from fear

Particularly in times like ours, when anxiety and depression rates are skyrocketing, this is a vital promise to cling to. Fear in its many forms can be a strong voice in our hearts and minds, one that wants to have the first and last word. But in Jesus, we know there’s hope for a different way to live. When He invites us into His family, Jesus releases us from all our sins and fears.

Just a few verses later in Romans 8, Paul lists many fear-inducing scenarios the world can bring our way, but then tells us, “In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (v. 37). All these things. There’s no situation where Jesus’ love for us isn’t stronger than our fear. This love changes everything, and it’s something we need to remind ourselves and each other of constantly.

Though we know our freedom in Christ, we’re still called to “encourage one another daily ... so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness” (Hebrews 3:13). Even in the darkest situations, fear won’t have the last word when God’s people speak truth to each other.

## REFLECT

Who has God placed around you who can remind you of your freedom in Christ when fear threatens to overtake your mind and heart?

## PROMISE #3

# We are known by God's Spirit

Being seen and known by someone is powerful. And when that someone speaks God’s truth into our lives, it can be a catalyst for our growth. Consider, then, the beauty of the promise in verse 16 that God’s own Spirit communicates with our spirits—our deepest places—and reminds us of our identity in Jesus. What could be more life-giving?

The Spirit works through God’s people to affirm truth and call us into our full potential as image bearers of our Creator. The Spirit’s role as comforter, counselor, and intercessor is evident when others walk with us through trials or joys and allow the Spirit to speak truth to us through them. As He reminds us of the new reality Jesus gives us, we can build up God’s Church by reminding others.

## REFLECT

How does being seen and known by the Spirit prompt you to encourage others to live into who God created them to be?

## PROMISE #4

# We will inherit God's kingdom

The NIV footnotes for Romans 8:15 have a helpful explanation of the unfamiliar word “sonship”: “The Greek word for adoption to sonship is a term referring to the full legal standing of an adopted male heir in Roman culture.” God is saying through Paul that, in Jesus, each member of His new family—sons and daughters alike—is given full rights to all that God has made. What a glorious reality!

But our inheritance doesn’t stop with receiving—we’re called to expand God’s kingdom. Our transformation into God’s beloved children motivates us to join His mission of restoring what is broken in the world and our lives. Imagine if we saw all our brothers and sisters in the Church as God sees us: co-heirs with Jesus Christ. Being co-heirs of God’s kingdom shouldn’t leave any room for division or disunity within the family of God. When we treat people as God’s beloved children, we invite them to live into their God-given dignity while displaying His miraculous love to the world.

## REFLECT

How would viewing all fellow believers as your co-heirs of God’s kingdom in Christ transform your relationships, both in your local church and in the global one? 🙌

# Shaped by others

By World Vision staff

**† WE CAN ALL THINK** of someone who influenced the course of our life, in a big way or even in a small way. Maybe it was a teacher who took extra time to help you understand a challenging subject or invited you to participate in a new activity. Perhaps it was a sports coach, a pastor, or a music teacher who pushed you to become better because they saw your potential. Maybe it was a loved one who encouraged you when you were at your lowest.

While God creates every person with unique gifts for a unique purpose, He often uses other people to draw out those gifts—to help us see our worth as He does, and to give us the nudge we need to reach our full potential.

So we asked people involved with World Vision to reflect on who believed in them and what impact it had on their life. As you read, consider: Who believed in you? Have you told them? And who do you believe in? What can you do to encourage them?

## Kelly Sim, 49, Washington

When Kelly's healthy, athletic husband tragically died of a stroke at just 33, she was left reeling with two children, then ages 2 and 3. As she grieved, she had to figure out how to move forward with so many questions about the future.

But one thing she did know: She and her husband had talked about how they wanted to use their life insurance money to help others, should one of them die.

Because they believed in the power of education for children, she decided to work with World Vision to start a school in her husband's name. The school would be built in the remote village in Zambia where the couple's first sponsored child was from. "It just became a much bigger project than we had planned, but God ... this was His orchestration," Kelly says.

She spent a lot of time planning, working with others, and raising additional funds as the project got bigger. The result is an accredited high school complete with computers—in an area that once lacked access to water and electricity.

Looking back, Kelly realizes it was her own children who gave

her the encouragement she needed to follow this calling. "My kids encouraged all of the times I needed to travel to Zambia and the time commitment required for all of the fundraising," she recalls. They wanted other students halfway around the world to have a chance at life, a chance to break the cycle of poverty, and they knew their mom could make it happen—and that it would honor their dad in the process. "They wanted to be a part," Kelly says. "They said, 'Someday, we'll work alongside you to support this school.'"



COURTESY OF KELLY SIM



KARI COSTANZA/WORLD VISION

## Peter Mutabazi, 48, North Carolina

Peter was a child when he ran away from an impoverished and abusive home to the Ugandan capital of Kampala—more than 300 miles away—and began living on the streets.

At a particularly low point, he hadn't eaten for two days, and when he went to scavenge among the garbage, he was attacked by dogs vying for the scraps, leaving him with wounds for weeks. "I did

not believe in me," Peter says. He thought he was going to die.

One day, he saw a well-dressed, English-speaking man buying food and decided to target him. As the man paid for his items, Peter offered to help him, hoping to steal the food without causing a commotion. "But before I could take, he said, 'Hey, what's your name?'" Peter recalls. "I lived in the streets for four years, and no one





LAURA REINHARDT/WORLD VISION

### Ron'ada Hewitt, 31, Washington, D.C.

For Ron'ada, growing up in the nation's capital wasn't always the inspiring experience often associated with landmarks, museums, and historical sites; instead, she remembers sirens, gunshots, drug deals, and a sense that everyone was just trying to survive living in the shadows of the monuments.

Amid the chaos around her, Ron'ada's mom worked hard to provide better for her family of four children. "Growing up, we thought she was just being super mean or strict or not allowing us to have fun," Ron'ada says. "I realize now that she had to do those things to keep us focused and keep us from getting in the shadows, seeing all the bad things about living in the projects."

Ron'ada worked hard to keep the values that her mother instilled in her and her siblings, and she eventually joined World Vision's local Youth Empowerment Program, where she, along with her cohort of eager change makers in the District, got to talk about issues in their community to members of the city council and their Congresswoman. "Being in that program changed the way I looked at the world because I think for once it made what I saw valid [and] real," she says.

One day a teaching assistant she barely knew told her that they could see "doctor" in front her name. "No one had ever told me that before," Ron'ada says. "And it was at that moment that I realized I could be so much more, I could do so much more."

She started down a path to earn a Ph.D., and now she's almost done. While pursuing this goal, she also teaches freshman English—and she draws on her personal experiences in the classroom. "A lot of teaching is instilling hope in your students, encouraging them, letting them know that you believe in them, believe in their abilities ... so that's who I believe in now—I believe in my students."

had ever asked me my name." He was used to being called garbage by all the people around him, but he introduced himself to the man, whose name was Jacques.

Jacques offered to give Peter food in exchange for carrying his groceries. This arrangement went on for a year and a half. "It was just a relief that a stranger would always give me something to eat, but above all, that he knew my name, that he called me by name, that he wanted to know me by name," Peter says.

Encouraged by Jacques's belief in him, Peter went on to get an education and move to the United States. Now he's fostered 17 children, adopted one, and is adopting three more. He also speaks to audiences about the power of believing in someone as a church advisor for World Vision.

Reflecting on how meeting Jacques changed his life, he says, "Now it's also my opportunity to believe in others because he believed in me."

### Selvin Garcia, 22, Honduras

When Selvin was 11 years old growing up in Yamaranguila, Honduras, his grandfather, who was like a father to him, died of Alzheimer's. "Sometimes I just didn't even want to get up," Selvin says. "I felt very bad actually, and my mom ... even when she was feeling the pain too, even when she was trying to comfort others, trying to comfort my grandma, she was always there for me, always seemed very strong, and I value that very much."

Tragic events like this have a way of making children in communities like Selvin's more vulnerable to gang activity and other harmful choices. That's if violence and limited economic opportunities haven't already pushed their families to migrate.

But Selvin's story would be different. His mom's example encouraged him to believe that helping others was the best way forward. He became involved in World Vision's community programs. He gained a vision for what his community could become, and as a child, he even built a model village to help others see his vision.

As he grew older, he saw the progress and positive change in his community thanks to World Vision's partnership. Families had access to clean water now. Children could get an education. Adults had more economic opportunities. He started volunteering with World Vision and remained committed to getting an education and being a source of positive change in his community long-term. His mom supported him every step of the way, cheering him on, encouraging him when he felt down, and never letting him doubt that he could be successful.

Now as a young man, he's finishing college and preparing to return to Yamaranguila to start a business to support local farmers. Selvin says, "I have a lot of faith in Honduras, in my country, in my people, and especially this project that I have, this dream of having my own business here, of being able to help ... generate employment in the future and to grow, to advance, to help more people directly and indirectly."



JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

## ● Inspire

### Addyson Moffitt, 14, Missouri

Addyson was only 7 years old when she met a Kenyan girl named Maurine at a Team World Vision event before the Kansas City Marathon. The two quickly became friends, despite their language barrier, and Addyson was inspired to run a half marathon the following year to raise money for clean water for children across Africa.

Her parents weren't quite sure she was serious at first, but as runners themselves, they decided to support her. She wanted to raise \$1,310—\$100 for every mile of her race—which felt massive at the time. Addyson's parents woke up early to run with her, they helped her fundraise, and they encouraged her to pray when it felt impossible.

When race day arrived, not only did she run that half marathon with Team World Vision, but she had also raised \$20,000 for clean water. "When somebody believes in you, I feel like you have the power to do anything," Addyson says.

From that experience, she knew her purpose was to help every child get access to clean water. Since then, she's run four half marathons

and participated in World Vision's Global 6K for Water®—and raised more than \$210,000 for clean water along the way. She even made an appearance on *The Steve Harvey Show*, and he surprised Addyson by reuniting her with Maurine on the show. He went on to donate to her fundraiser and paid for Addyson and her family to visit Maurine in Kenya.

While her sense of purpose has remained as steadfast as her running, it hasn't been easy. Every step of the way, people have said she can't do it or that she's too young. Other kids have made fun of her. "I just got to remind myself about all of the things I've done and remind myself who I am," she says. "And their opinions don't matter because I know that my parents and many other people along the way believe in me."



JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

JON WARREN/WORLD VISION



### Margo Day, 63, Washington

When Margo was just 18 years old, she started attending a missions-based church that saw a need to bring medical clinics to rural Venezuela, where people were suffering. She hadn't been attending very long and didn't think anyone even knew who she was. She says, "This pastor comes to me, and he says, 'We're going to be setting up medical clinics ... and we believe that electronic patient medical records will be the best way for people to access specialist physicians who are miles away and receive quality medical advice. So do you want to learn how to code?'"

She was initially confused (after all, it was 1977). "The first thing that went through my head was, 'What? What is coding?'" she says. "Then I thought to myself, 'Well, I actually don't know what I can't do, and so I might as well give this a try.'" She said yes, and it completely changed the trajectory of her life, starting her career in technology. "It helped me in two ways," she says. "One was to actually experience for myself that I could create something out of nothing. ... Secondly, it fueled this natural curiosity that I have about, well, what's going on in the world? Could I use technology as a way to solve problems?"

Margo entered the tech industry and built a successful career at Microsoft, where she

was involved in programs like Girls Who Code. She eventually got involved with World Vision's Kenya Big Dream program, aimed at eliminating female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. She saw a need for computers at the school where the girls who had fled child marriage were getting an education. She knew that countries that embraced technology thrived at higher rates than those that didn't, and she wanted to make sure these girls had every chance to thrive.

It was the mid-2000s, and most of the girls had never seen a computer before. "When we brought this computer lab in, it was like giving water to fish," she says. "The girls just plunged into trying to figure [it all out]. You could just see the seed of potential just expand in such a short period of time.... The joy of believing in someone is to watch someone else's life open up before you, just because you had a little piece in helping them see what was possible." +

*Kari Costanza, Kristy J. O'Hara-  
Glaspie, and Laura Reinhardt  
contributed to this story.*



#### SCAN THE CODE

to watch videos of these stories.



# The power of belief in a letter

Written by  
Catherine Turcios  
Photographed by  
André Guardiola, World Vision  
Sony A7 III  
24mm lens, 1/200  
at f/4, ISO 200

**WHAT VALUE COULD A SINGLE LETTER** hold? I found out when I met Dassari (kneeling below). As I listened to her story, I began to connect a series of “coincidences” that were not coincidental at all. They were moments that God worked together to transform Dassari’s life.

Dassari received a letter from her World Vision sponsor, Angie, when she was 15. It arrived at a time when she was trying to face her fears and discover her passions. It’s not easy to be a teenager. It’s not always easy to live in a place like Honduras, a country impacted by disasters both natural and manmade. Getting to know the person who had

believed in her for many years would be life-changing.

When Angie wrote that letter, she was a 21-year-old working as a teacher in an elementary school in the United States. In the letter, Angie described her work to Dassari. Even without a photo, the details in the letter helped Dassari imagine her sponsor in the classroom—and it kindled her imagination about her own future as well.

When I met Dassari, she was a 21-year-old schoolteacher, empowering girls by accompanying World Vision in different communities and sharing some of the training that she experienced through sponsorship.

Dassari told me she felt like she was living her sponsor’s life and making it her own. It was evident that someone had taught her to believe in herself. And for me, discovering these types of stories and witnessing moments like this—moments when you see how one person’s small action can change another’s life in a big way—makes me feel alive and inspired as well.

It all started with a letter. As children’s author Susan Lendroth says, “To write is human, to receive a letter: divine.” It’s divine what God can make possible through your interactions with others. Your words could make others believe in themselves. +



**SCAN THE CODE**

to read Dassari’s story  
and see more photos.



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*Mahana, 9, Niger, carrying  
water for her family*

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