



THIS IS OUR EDEN

In Kenya, World Vision and the church join heart and soul to effect lasting change.

Raindrops pelted Pastor Paul Kyambu as he struggled to walk from the market back home. This was a rain that demanded he find shelter. The pastor made his way to the nearest house and knocked on the door. Inside—something he'd never witnessed in all his years in Kalawa, Kenya, a small community southeast of Nairobi.

Pastor Paul had stumbled upon a house of bootleggers. "People were drunk," he says. A scuffle ensued—a brawl fueled by alcohol. What he saw next, he'll never forget, even two decades later. A woman emerged from the bedlam. "She took off her jacket, hung it on the wall, and picked out one of the men who was causing chaos," he says. With a series of quick jabs—right, left, right—the woman dispensed with the inebriated party. "He fell outside, headlong into a river of water," says Pastor Paul. Later, he found out she wasn't only a bootlegger. She was also a boxer.

That was the house where Dominic Wambua lived with his family: a beer-brewing father and his sister who boxed. For a few years, he'd run it himself—a kitchen distillery with removable floorboards covering a deep pit used to hide illegal brew from midnight police raids. "Until he came to know the Lord," says Pastor Paul, now 59, "that was his business."

Kalawa was a place in need of transformation in mind and in spirit. With sponsorship as the foundation, World Vision and Kalawa's Pastors' Fellowship set about mending hearts and souls.

Overcoming the Darkness

"I want to create the Garden of Eden here," says Dominic, now 50, gesturing to the land around him—leafy, green pumpkin vines inching their way from the soil. Gentle in voice and demeanor, it is hard to picture him in his former life. For Dominic, a husband and father of seven children, including four orphans, this is an about-face from the man he once was. "Before—I was consumed in darkness," he says, "Now—I am out in the light." On a clear blue-sky day, it shows. Dominic shines from within.

Dominic's story is one of many that illustrate what transformation looks like in countries where World Vision and the church join forces. "To make sure our projects last forever," says one World Vision staffer, "we have to be connected to the church." And because World Vision works to bring clean water, good health, education, and economic development to benefit children—the

Pictured above: Dominic, his wife Ruth, and their children Grace and Joseph



Bernard plays soccer with sponsored child Nicholas and his siblings.

connection points start with child sponsorship and the solid funding base it provides.

"Sponsorship is the heartbeat of the project," says Bernard Kivuva, 35, who manages child sponsorship and World Vision's relationship with the churches in Kalawa. Of the 30,000 people who live here, more than 4,000 are sponsored by World Vision donors in the United States. If you live in Kalawa, there's a good chance you have a sponsor, have a sibling who is sponsored, or are the parent of a sponsored child. Sponsorship focuses on relationships, says Bernard. "In creating and maintaining these relationships, we can provide things like water, through which we can help families grow spiritually and in every way."

Joining Heart and Soul

If sponsorship is the heartbeat of the project, World Vision's work with the church is its soul. "When you transform the church, you transform the community," says Bernard. In Kalawa, pastors had the will to serve, but needed help to unite. "There was a lot of mistrust," says Pastor Paul. "If I saw you moving near my people, I thought you were snatching them to your church." In 2007, the pastors faced a common foe when nearby witchdoctors attempted to prove that they were more powerful than the church. The pastors joined forces, forming a Pastors' Fellowship to counter this ungodly idea and then began reaching out to serve the community together by building a nursery school. But running a school was expensive and the stress of managing such a big project threatened to undo the group.

"We were united, but we didn't trust one another as a body of Christ," says Pastor Paul. "World Vision's manager sought us out. He said, 'World Vision is Christian. I'm looking for community leaders. I would like to choose pastors as strong stakeholders.'" The project he proposed, Kenya Christian Discipleship, would accomplish three goals—training pastors

and Sunday school teachers, working to mend broken family relationships, and empowering people to lift themselves out of poverty.

Pastors' Fellowship

The first thing World Vision did was bus a group from the Pastors' Fellowship north to Tseikuru, Kenya, where they could witness what teamwork looked like. On that trip were Pastor David Ashcraft and his wife, Ruth, from LCBC (Lives Changed by Christ) Church in Pennsylvania, who helped train the pastors, starting with a lesson on peacebuilding. The training was eye-opening for the pastors. "When we came home," says Paul, "we really preached peace. Without peace, people are not able to work together."

Next, World Vision brought in teachers from Scott Christian University to grow the Pastors' Fellowship through a two-year study of theology. Fifty pastors—33 men and 17 women—would graduate two years later. Pastors like Japheth Ndonye, 48, of Christian Worship International Ministries, began to get excited about preaching. "We were doing it," he says, "but not with skills. Now our sermons have a theme. Now I can get to the point in five minutes." He also saw how successful churches extend beyond their walls. "[The Apostle] Paul said, 'Follow me as I follow Christ.' For you to be effective, you have to be a change agent," he says. Fortified with new ministry skills in preaching and pastoring, Pastor Japheth took on the person who needed change the most: Dominic Wambua.

Transforming Dominic

"Dominic was a drunkard from the word Go," says Pastor Japheth, and abusive to his wife and children. His wife, Ruth, 47, remembers how he would come home drunk and pour beer into the family's staple food, a cornmeal porridge called Ugali, making it impossible to eat. At times, says Ruth, "he'd



Pastors in Kalawa worship at a meeting of the Pastors' Fellowship group.



Pastor Japheth

wake up the kids and make them sing to him.” At his worst, she says, “He would beat up the family and fight with people who came to drink with him.”

But deep inside was something good. Buoyed by a new understanding of Scripture, Pastor Japheth would meet him in the market. “We got to know one another,” he says. “He used to like hearing the Word of God. I said, ‘God loves you. He has a good plan for your life.’” Theological training had helped Pastor Japheth to find the right words, but he needed something more to reach Dominic. Pastor Japheth had a thought: World Vision had taken him and other members of the Pastors’ Fellowship to Yatta, Kenya, to learn a new way of farming—digging water pans to capture water instead of relying on unreliable rains—scarce, spotty, and sometimes torrential. Teaching Dominic these new farming techniques could provide an opportunity to connect on common ground. “I said, ‘Come on, Dominic, I’ve learned a new technique.’”

Dominic was intrigued. He stopped drinking and started digging. “When I woke up,” says Ruth, “I would find him excavating a water pan. I would go to a meeting and find him still there.” Pastor Japheth encouraged Dominic to work with other farmers. Dominic joined a group of 100 who were trained in Empowered Worldview.

World Vision’s livelihood and resilience expert, Jackson Muraguri, who trains the farmers says, “Empowered Worldview training helps farmers know their identity in God and to chart their own course.” The training shifts mindsets from dependence to reliance on themselves and God. Dominic formed a group calling themselves Blessed Hands. They began to farm together and meet as a small group—Tuesdays for prayer; Wednesdays for fellowship, Thursdays as a home group, Fridays for choir practice, and Sundays at church. Before they farm, they sing together—wonderful songs like, “This is the day that the Lord has made,” their harmonies soaring into a clear, blue sky.

Focusing on Families

Ruth and Dominic also went through Celebrating Families training. Celebrating Families is a remarkable program that restores marriages and families, crippled by the anger and mistrust that sometimes comes with poverty. “When a family does not have enough food or money, the wife and husband disagree. They think God has neglected them,” says Pastor Moses Onesmus Mutuku of the Gospel Furthering Bible Church.

In Kalawa, World Vision trained 44 couples as counselors, including nine couples in the Pastors’ Fellowship group. Couples begin the training, which can take a year; by addressing issues they may have never considered before—past hurts that have created unhealthy mindsets—experiences such as being beaten or forced to work as a child, going barefoot, or dropping out of school to carry water for the family. Through Celebrating Families training, Ruth and Dominic’s relationship was restored.

As love returned, they became better parents to Joshua, 16, Grace, 12, and Joseph, 11. Grace and Joseph, both sponsored, attend a Sunday school taught by a member of the Pastors’ Fellowship, Agnes Kalondu Nzioki, who World Vision trained in Celebrating Families and as a Sunday school teacher. Agnes now teaches with zeal—a change Grace and Joseph say they’ve experienced. “It’s better,” says Grace, an orphan the family took in. Joseph says he loves the W’ano, the Bible stories Agnes shares, often through music and drama as she creates lessons the children will not forget.

Before, she says, “I taught without word or knowledge. I learned how to relate to the children.” World Vision’s training is supplemented by yearly visits by LCBC who spend three days teaching pastors and Sunday school teachers. They also visit their sponsored children. Of the 4,000 sponsored children in Kalawa—half are supported by members of LCBC.



Hand-in-hand Bible study group meets at Dominic and Ruth’s home to study Scripture before doing farm work together.



Lessons don't end on Sunday. School Bible clubs that World Vision formed in Kalawa, carry spiritual nurture for children throughout the week. There are 11 clubs at schools in the area with nearly 700 children. At first, World Vision taught the teachers to run the clubs. "Now the students are teaching the classes," says Bernard. "One teacher told me, 'Now we just get them together. They run the show.'" World Vision continues to expand the program to the rest of Kalawa's schools—40 in all. "I will not rest until I reach 40," says Bernard. The children read from Bibles supplied by World Vision. "They know where Habakkuk is," laughs Bernard. "They know the importance of prayer." Sponsored child, Nicholus Musembi, 11, attends Bible club every week. His mother Jennifer says, "He has changed. He doesn't let us eat before we pray."

This Is Our Eden

In a few short years, a community in the grip of poverty and entranced by the lure of witchdoctors has come together—joining heart and soul. Pastor Japheth finds the change in Kalawa remarkable. "This is our Eden," he says. The pastors they will continue moving forward even after World Vision

moves on, leaving them in charge. Kalawa's children will be in good hands. World Vision community development workers monitor the well-being of sponsored children in tandem with the Pastors' Fellowship. Pastors translate and deliver letters from US donors to their sponsored children. "They visit them. They listen to them," says Pastor Paul. "They are not actual angels, but they can be used by God to behave as watchmen of the sponsored children."

Dominic is a watchman, too—caring for his family and community and tending his land. He hopes his recently planted pumpkins will bring in 1,000,000 Kenyan shillings (US \$10,000) in two months. The profits will not be spent on beer as before, but on making life better for his wife and children. He'll pay for their schooling first and then begin to renovate the house. Dominic is always thinking about how to make things better. He recently started planting vegetables in garden beds made from old tires. He's toying with buying an incubator to hatch more chickens. "Only God knows what he'll think of next," says his wife with a smile. For Dominic, a rocky life is now lived on solid ground—in a place that looks a little more like Eden every morning.



World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. Motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ, we serve alongside the poor and oppressed as a demonstration of God's unconditional love for all people. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.

worldvisionphilanthropy.org

KEN19ELOREP-CD_New Eden_3.12.19 © 2019 World Vision, Inc.

