

Upendo “Love” Nchunguru Working Group, Kenya Partnered with Buncombe Street UMC, 2012-2014

Head of Household: Agnes, 16

Siblings: Morris, 19; Solomon, 15; Joyrine, 3

Challenges: The big smile on Agnes’ face as she works on a client’s hair belies the hardships she has faced. The family was already impoverished before the parents died, but with the loss of their father in 2011 followed by the mother a year later, their situation became even more dire. The family struggled to feed themselves, pay education expenses, and treat their stomach illnesses.

Agnes’ Dream

Each vulnerable child in the ZOE empowerment program begins their journey out of extreme poverty by creating a “Dream” document to identify goals help them stay focused. Here are the Dream responses from Agnes for herself and her family:

1. What makes you feel sad? *Death of my parents.*
2. What makes you happy? *When I can provide for my siblings.*
3. What happens in the community that you do not like? *Drunkards and irresponsible people.*
4. What is your dream for the future? *To be a successful business woman.*
5. What will be your guiding principles? *Prayers, hard work and not wasting time.*

Achievements:

With the knowledge she gained from ZOE training sessions and the proper resources to begin, Agnes successfully planted a family kitchen garden. Now she harvests enough produce to prepare well balanced meals for her family. To further increase their food security and cover the costs of other necessities, Agnes applied for and received a grant from her working group to open a salon and beauty shop in the local market. Because ZOE encourages all members to help each other achieve their dreams, Agnes decided to share her blessings by training other orphans in her shop.



ZOE helped the family get medical attention for their parasitic stomach infections while also teaching Agnes how to keep their bodies, home and food clean so that they can avoid preventable diseases. The family built a drying rack for their dishes and dug a compost pit with the help of other working group members. After a home visit by

the ZOE social worker confirmed that Agnes and her family had improved their health standards, they were given mosquito nets.

Some children in the family were not going to school because they lacked the proper school uniforms. Your partnership covered the expense of uniforms, books and fees so that the children could quickly return to classes. Agnes is being taught how to budget the money she earns so that she will be able to pay for their education in the future.

When the children lost both parents in such a short amount of time, it must have seemed like their world was falling apart. But your partnership has brought Agnes and her siblings into a community that shares their challenges, offers help when needed and together worships God in prayer and devotion. From this foundation Agnes is building a new life for herself and her siblings.

Focus On: Income Generation

While learning how to grow food, keep livestock, and obtain an education is important, orphaned and vulnerable children will not be able to escape extreme poverty or dependency unless they also learn how to make and manage money.

ZOE helps the young family leaders develop multiple income sources. Their working group initiates group business projects that will provide some money for all to share. It might be an agricultural project or animal breeding since these are labor intensive and all can participate. Individual orphan households also start small income generating activities such as buying and selling a value added commodity like eggs they have boiled or mangos bought in bulk. Before being given resources to start these small businesses, ZOE trains the young people on how to be business savvy and manage the money they earn, including reinvesting to grow the business.

ZOE helps the children dream larger dreams about how they can provide for themselves and their siblings in more secure ways. For example, ZOE may help a child enroll in vocational classes to start a trade business (like tailoring, auto mechanic, or hair styling), open a kiosk business to sell dry goods, or enlarge their farm or livestock breeding to produce surplus they can sell. It is typical for an ambitious young person in the ZOE program to run several income generating activities simultaneously.

ZOE trains all working group members on how to craft a business plan and manage the business of their choosing. After this training, the group takes the following steps:

- Discusses what businesses could succeed in their community; and how they can cooperate to serve the market if multiple children want to try the same business,
- Creates individual and group business plans, presenting these to the group for discussion.
- Votes to approve the proposal or help the member create a better plan.

Once the business plan is approved, the individual will receive a micro-grant and/or start-up kit to begin. Throughout this process, the ZOE social worker is available to provide guidance, but not to tell the group what to do or make decisions for them. In this way the children begin to learn how to make their own decisions while assisting one another, so they may continue this process beyond the three-year ZOE program.

Head of Household: Faith, 18

Sibling: Jerusha, 10

Challenges Faced: With the loss of her father and the inability of her mother to provide for the family, Faith became the family leader. We do not know how many years Faith has tried to fill this role, but we do know it has been a daily struggle. At the time she and her family joined the Upendo Nchunguru Working Group they did not participate in any community activities, one of the members was suffering from malaria, and they usually ate only one meal a day. Improving the quality and quantity of their meals was a priority.

Focus On: Food Security

Children entering the ZOE empowerment program struggle every day to alleviate their hunger. Usually they try to find work, but because they lack status or an adult advocate, they are paid extremely low wages or small amounts of food. If the children beg, they are a nuisance to the community; if they take from the fields, they are thieves. They might try growing their own food, but they often lack the resources or knowledge to succeed. It is not unusual for these children to go two or three days without eating, and what they do eat is often of poor nutritional value and can lead to health problems.

With guidance from ZOE social workers, new working groups immediately explore their options for attaining a stable food source. Because ZOE is an empowerment program, the children are not told what to do, but rather are given options and training so that they can devise their own approach to becoming food secure and self-sufficient.

During initial meetings, ZOE trains working group members in agriculture, nutrition and animal husbandry. After training, the children decide how best to use the resources that your partnership provides. As a group or individually, they might plant a crop or initiate a money-making activity like buying and selling produce. Most families also plant kitchen gardens to provide a variety of food for their daily meals and to counter malnutrition. Where appropriate, ZOE will distribute goats, chickens or rabbits to families for both nutritional (milk, eggs, meat) and income (breeding, selling products) benefits.

Faith's Life Dream

During the first or second meeting of a working group, each family completes the Dream process to help them examine their current situation and set goals for transforming their lives. Faith and her family's "Dream" responses are below:

1. What makes you feel sad? *Death of my father*
2. What makes you happy? *Having my own money*
3. What happens in the community that you do not like? *People who fight and gossip with each other*
4. What is your dream for the future? *To have a big salon and beauty shop that is successful*
5. What will be your guiding principles to achieve your dream? *Prayers and helping others*



Family specific achievements because of your partnership:

Faith was already growing some food at home, but like most of the young people who enter into the ZOE empowerment program, she did not have adequate agricultural knowledge or access to good quality seeds. ZOE helped Faith improve her garden and provided seeds so could plant a crop of maize. Faith realized she could not fully support her family by farming so she applied to her working group for funds to attend vocational school and then presented a business plan for a start-up grant to open a hair salon. Her shop is a great success and she is following through on one of her guiding principles by training other group members to become hair stylists.

While building her business, Faith also received training from ZOE on child rights and legal protections so that others could not take advantage of her age and inexperience. ZOE connects young family leaders to people in the community who can help with such issues. Additionally, each working group invites a community member they respect to be a mentor to the group, someone who can help them when the ZOE social worker is absent.

During these past two years, with your support Faith has improved her family's economic and nutritional status and applied lessons from the health and disease prevention training to provide a healthier living environment. This support has also made it possible for her younger sister to attend school regularly. Perhaps most importantly, Faith is now connected to the larger community as a contributing member and to a group of friends with whom she regularly shares dreams, challenges, and prayer.



Head of Household: Bessy, 21 **Siblings:** Penina, 15; Moses, 13

Challenges Faced: Bessy's father is deceased and her mother is battling HIV. Although the family was getting by, they were living on the edge. With no surplus resources and no relatives to help them, it was only a matter of time before their mother's illness or some other unexpected event would take the family from poverty to desperation. Already, the younger siblings were finding it difficult to attend school and the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS meant Bessy faced discrimination when she looked for ways to earn money. When ZOE invited Bessy to join the Nchunguru Upendo Working Group, she and her family began working their way back from the edge. And it started with a dream.

Focus on: The Dream

Most orphans and vulnerable children entering the ZOE empowerment program face a daily struggle to survive. With their energy consumed by the need to find food for themselves and their siblings, there is neither time to think about the future nor reason to hope for something better. But through ZOE and your partnership, the children learn to imagine a new life and prepare to make it a reality.

During one of the early working group meetings, the ZOE social worker leads members through an exercise called the Dream process where they explore their current situation and then consider what they want and how to get it. They then create a poster of their responses to a standard set of questions the social worker provides. To the right is an example of the Dream document.



The head of each family presents their Dream to the rest of the working group members who express support and give feedback. These Dream documents help the social worker better understand the conditions of the children's lives so they can address specific needs or traumas suffered. The family keeps a copy of their Dream, often displaying it in their home to provide daily motivation as they strive to create their new life.

The following is the response from Bessy and her family to the dream questions:

1. What makes you feel sad? *Death of my father*
2. What makes you happy? *To be healthy and alive*
3. What happens in the community that you do not like? *People being idle, fighting*
4. What is your dream for the future? *Owning a tailoring shop*
5. What will be your guiding principles? *Prayer*

Family specific achievements because of your partnership:

Bessy began her family's journey towards self-sufficiency with improving their food security. Using the training and seeds ZOE provides, Bessy improved her family's garden. Then, to improve the nutritional value of their diet and quickly generate an income, she applied to her working group for money to purchase four chickens. Now she has eggs and occasionally meat to serve her family, but mainly she raises the chickens to sell in the local market.

Each member of the working group creates a plan for self-sufficiency and then discusses it with the other members. While Bessy indicated that she wanted to own a tailor shop, she and her working group peers decided that raising chicken was the best approach for now. ZOE encourages young family leaders to develop several income generating activities, so it is likely Bessy will still have a chance to take vocational training to start a tailoring business.

ZOE helped Bessy take several other steps to improve her family's well-being. She learned about the legal rights she has as a child head of household and she joined others to support child rights by participating in Day of the African Child events. ZOE provided uniforms and other school materials so that the younger siblings could attend classes regularly. During the past two years, ZOE has also taught Bessy and the other family leaders how to avoid illnesses by developing healthy habits like washing hands, boiling water, keeping dishes on a drying rack above the ground and clearing bushes from around the house to keep pests away. After a home visit by a ZOE social worker confirmed that Bessy's family was implementing the lessons, ZOE gave them mosquito nets and blankets.

These steps may seem small, but with each one Bessy is building a stronger foundation for her family's future success, a future that will not balance on the edge of subsistence.



Head of Household: Mary, 20 **Siblings:** Raphael, 17; Hillary, 15

Orphans are usually the outcasts of their village; barely surviving on the handouts available and never acquiring enough to improve their situation. Often, others will take advantage of their destitute status to hire them for manual labor and then pay them only small amounts of food. They are trapped in their situation. ZOE offers them a means to working their way out of the cycle of dependency. Through ZOE, Mary received training and resources to open her own tailoring shop. Because she is a skilled tailor, she has many customers in her village coming to her shop. Business is very good and Mary can now provide for her two siblings and send them to school.



Head of Household: Doreen, 18
Siblings: Heider, Hilary, Eli, Damaris

Through ZOE, Doreen learned about business management and trained to be a hairdresser. When her training was complete, ZOE provided her with a start-up kit that included a sink, brushes, combs and other materials so she could open her own salon. The income Doreen receives from her salon enables her to provide for her four younger siblings to return to school.

Head of Household: Mercy, 20 **Siblings:** Francis, 15

One of the most important aspects of the ZOE empowerment program is that it enables working groups to govern themselves. Both the group as a whole and the individuals within the group make the decisions as to how they will improve their lives. During weekly meetings, members share their plans for income generation with others in the working group in order to receive support and advice as to how best to accomplish their goals. A ZOE social worker attends to guide process, and the group is encouraged to help each other succeed. For Mercy, learning the skills to be a tailor and to manage her own business was the best way for her to escape poverty and take care of her five siblings. ZOE was there to provide training and the materials to begin her business.



Head of Household: Murithi, 20 **Siblings:** Susan, 21; Isaac, 15

ZOE works to help orphaned families become food secure and financially stable. Usually that includes training for agricultural work or vocations and start up resources in the form of items (seed, sewing machines, etc) or micro-grants. The working groups are also encouraged and taught how to create a revolving fund. This way they have money set aside to provide loans to their members once they have graduated from their three-year ZOE empowerment program. Through ZOE, Henry received the money he needed to open a kiosk shop. With his earnings he can take care of his younger sibling who attends school.



Upendo “Love” Nchunguru Working Group, Kenya



Focus On: Working Group Formation

Poverty often means a life lived in isolation, unconnected even from those who share the same struggles and challenges. A ZOE working group provides orphans and vulnerable children a community where they experience understanding, compassion and acceptance. Together, they begin their journey towards a better life.

To form a working group, ZOE social workers first contact community leaders and local officials to educate them about the empowerment approach and to ask for their help in identifying children. During the first meeting, the children and their young caregivers learn how they will change and improve their lives within three years. Then ZOE takes a step back.

Working group members elect their own leadership, make rules to guide their meetings, choose a group name and decide where to hold weekly gatherings. These once-marginalized children learn from ZOE staff that their community and their Hope Companion partner have faith in their ability to succeed.

The eldest child from each family attends weekly meetings to discuss their activities, both achievements and challenges, and to share in prayer and reflection with each other. Additionally, ZOE's staff and selected community members host regional training sessions covering food security, health and disease prevention, business management and child rights.

One of the first actions the group takes is to select a project, such as a group farm, which they undertake together to quickly secure food and generate income. Because of your support, ZOE is then able to provide the basic training and resources they need to begin.

Name List

Below is the list of names recorded by our ZOE social worker during group formation; **there are 35 households and a total of 135 members**. The names in bold are heads of household, followed by their siblings. Occasionally, an older person lives with the family, but is unable to provide for them due to age or illness. ZOE works with orphaned and vulnerable children ages infant through college age. Although ZOE obtains name lists with both first and last names, ZOE uses first names only in public lists to preserve the privacy of children in the program.

Please note, children joining the ZOE program are living in extreme poverty situations. Often they have no parents or birth documentation and have suffered multiple traumas in their young lives. Occasionally the children give conflicting information on their names and ages. Additional orphans are frequently adopted by the group, and a small percentage of children will leave the group due to family reunification or other reasons. ZOE strives to keep the list as up-to-date as possible. All the names on this list represent real children in need of your prayers.

Doris, 17 Kan'gentu, 16 Mwingwa, 15 Mutembei, 11 James, 10	Glory, 16 Florah, 14 Simon, 17 Benson, 15 Wendy, 13	Glory, 17 Damaris, 14 Patrick, 10 Joseph, 12 Glory, 17	Moses, 17 Purity, 16 Olive, 2 Mary, 17 Kendi, 16	Laibun, 17 Kimathi, 15 Catherine, 20 Yustus, 12 Kelvin, 9
Christopher, 17 Florence, 15 Haron, 10	Morris, 19 Agnes, 17 Solomon, 15 Joyrine, 3	Mutembei, 18 Glory, 13 Martin, 5	Winfred, 19 Mary, 17 Abraham, 14 Hilder, 12 Ken, 16	Lydia, 15 Fridah, 17 Martin, 1
Alex, 17 Timothy, 16 John, 14 John, 11	John, 19 Ann, 17 Victor, 3	Laibuni, 17 Justin, 13	Mary, 20 Raphael, 17 Hillary, 15	Damaris, 12 Ann, 9 Jacob, 15 Ronard, 13
Doreen, 17 Heider Hilary Eli Damaris	Florence, 19 Francis, 17 Francis, 14 Bessy, 20 Penina, 14 Moses, 12	Lawrence, 17 Raphael, 14 Jediell, 12	John, 18 Ken, 17 Eli, 14	Emily, 12 Maureen, 12 Joy, 8 Josphine, 4 Sharon, 3
Mercy, 17 Francis, 15	Damaris, 17 Caroline, 16 Mugambi, 14 Emma, 10	Denis, 17 Lenah, 13	Ayub, 18 Bundi, 16 Lenah, 9 Gacheri, 4	Frida, 16 Jackline, 13 Lenah, 12 Maureen
Grace, 18 Julias, 14 Eunice, 12	Henry, 19 Susan, 21 Isaac, 15	Josphat, 17 Elias, 12 Gilbert, 15	Purity, 17 David, 13 Olive	Alice, 18 Damaris, 14 Winfred, 16 Fiona, 12 Alpadax, 5
Lucy, 18 Purity, 15 Charles, 19	Gloria, 19 Gakii, 17 Lenah, 4	Stella, 17 Benjamin, 19 Laibuni, 17	Ann, 18 Lucy, 15 Christopher, 12 Olive, 3	
Mukiri, 19 Muthee, 19 Selecial, 13		John, 17 Fridah, 16		