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Greetings from sunny, bright Entebbe!

Every September the World Renew East African Ministry Team gathers to reconnect and have fun together. This year our meeting was in Entebbe, Uganda, right on the shore of Lake Victoria. What a wonderful reunion. **We had lots of fun:** games, a sack race, soccer games. **We also did business:** sharing reports and experiences, learning new things, reviewing the past year, planning for future activities, committing these plans to the Lord, and *restoring our hope* in the plans that the Lord has for us and the communities we serve.

**HOPE – such a beautiful word!!** Just thinking about it brings Job 5:16 to mind: “So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth!” What an encouragement for the work we do. Through our program activities, we preach **hope** as given to us in Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” And we also **commit to the call** in Micah 6:8: “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

So once again we share our stories of hope and how *simple practices and acts have shut the mouth of some of the injustices our communities face*. Please rejoice in the Lord with us as you read these stories. We would also like to rejoice with you so please remember to share with us your celebrations and areas where we can pray with you.

## Little is much when God is in it A Story of Transformation

By Carol Musoke, Constituency Bridger

As Christians, one of our deepest desires is to reach out, show love, and give hope to others. It becomes even more precious when we do this in collaboration with others. But so many times we become paralyzed by wrongly assuming that, when it comes to impoverished communities, only the “big projects” make a real difference.

Last year some World Renew staff attended a training on truth-centered transformation [[www.reconciledworld.org](http://www.reconciledworld.org)] and learned that one of the best ways to transform a community and build strong, long-lasting relationships is to perform “little” acts of love that require very little financial investment – often less than \$10.

Hhhmmm... *Just how possible is this?!* A visiting team of students from Calvin Christian High School in Grandville, Michigan, together with World Renew partner church, Ajulu Church of Uganda, in the diocese of Northern



Uganda, were challenged by World Renew Uganda to test this theory.

In July of this year, fourteen excited students and their four leaders boarded a bus with a team from the Ajulu Church youth group to journey to The Father’s House, a Ugandan orphanage. Their “little” act of love? Planting onion seedlings, fruit trees, and shade trees in The Father’s House vegetable garden, bought for only \$10. Here’s an excerpt from the Calvin Christian students’ blog about their trip:

*“We began with introductions in the church and then proceeded to transplant green on-*

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# Revived, Restored, and Renewed Hope for Living

## A Story of Transformation

Rev. Obadiah Batali



by Joseph Mutebi  
Program Consultant  
Uganda Team

For the last year, World Renew has provided emergency response support to the South Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda in partnership with local Christian agency Here Is Life. Some of that support has included workshops in trauma healing and peace building for refugees traumatized by violence, war, and displacement. The Reverend Obadiah Batali's story illustrates the power of trauma healing workshops, as they offer attendees the opportunity to express their hurts and lay them before God.

Rev. Obadiah Batali fled civil war in South Sudan and currently lives in the Bidibidi refugee settlement in Yumbe district in northern Uganda. Obadiah lost his wife in 2014 and takes care of his five daughters and one son alone. Upon being settled in Bidibidi, he encouraged his friends and other people in the village to construct a church out of temporary materials in the village. Obadiah was chosen to be a leader of that church in the settlement.

Calamity befell Obadiah when his only son was infected with Hepatitis B within six months of settling in Bidibidi. Obadiah nursed his son for five months, but in June of this year his son died, leaving Obadiah's two grandchildren fatherless. With a widowed

daughter-in-law and grandchildren now entirely under his care, Obadiah started asking God why all this tragedy has befallen him at such a time in his life. Traditionally in Uganda, a son means a lot for a parent's future; now the son in whom Obadiah's hopes had been invested was gone. Deeply depressed, he left his leadership in the church, isolated himself from the church, and stopped participating in village activities. "I found it useless to live," says Obadiah, "and contemplated suicide so as to join the dead." Obadiah had given up on life.

But Obadiah's community did not give up on him. When trauma and healing workshops were planned in the community, Rev. Obadiah was identified as one of the elders and trainees for the trauma healing because of his position as a church leader who had an unaddressed burden in the heart.

And what a blessing that training was! During the five day trauma healing and peace building training, Rev. Obadiah surrendered his depression and the challenges of taking care of more people to God. Today his story is different and this is what he has to say: "For the rest of the journey of my life, I leave it to God who designs and leads accordingly. I felt relieved and now restored back to the ministry. I had lost hope as a result of the loss of my son, but now I can move forward with my hope restored".



### We are thankful for:

- the emergency response support for South Sudanese refugees in Bidibidi settlement.
- rains that came to alleviate the water shortage in the settlement and provide hope for good crop growth.
- safety on the roads as we travel

### Please pray:

- for restoration of peace in South Sudan
- for enhanced security against armed robbery and killings in West Nile.
- that God will continue to shower his grace, peace, and love upon all that we do.

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ions to a field. Next, we each planted a tree throughout the property. There were both fruit trees and shade trees that we planted. We then had a blast playing with the kids. :) Many people in the group played soccer with the children and we won 2-1 so that was exciting! Some people also threw frisbees and jumped rope with the children. Everyone was very happy to have us there. The kids were constantly smiling and laughing with us. We didn't want to leave them and they didn't want to leave us! The women of the church prepared a traditional Ugandan lunch for us. It consisted of goat, chicken, rice, beans, cabbage, and posho which is made out of maize. This posho is used as their silverware so we got an authentic experience for sure."

To read more about their time in Uganda, check out their blog here: <http://volunteerblog.worldrenew.net/calvin17>

One of the church elders and a member of the Father's House governing board had this to say:

"This is the proper way of doing things - these two groups of young people working together and getting dirty together in the garden is wonderful to witness. It's good to see the young people from North America playing freely with our children and getting dirty in our gardens - they are now one of us. It is very encouraging to our young people and I am sure that all these young people - even those from America - will never forget this day."

So, do you think the theory of "little" acts of love worked? Would you like to test it out in your community?

Please share your experience with us.

# From Shame to Glory

## A Story of Transformation



by Edward Okiror  
Program Consultant  
Uganda Team

With the help of God, James Maguma has changed the story of his family from a story of desperation to a story of hope. Joining a World Renew sponsored village savings and loan association gave him the tools he needed to make this change.

James and his wife Sauja and their three daughters are one of thirty-nine households in the village of Orwadai, Uganda. **Choosing to live in a rural village was a big decision.** "I am a diploma holder in information technology from Kampala International University," says James. "After my studies I remained in Kampala, the capital city, working with different companies. Life became hard with a young family to take care of. **Meeting our basic needs was just a tug of war.**"

"One day," James continues, "I made up my mind to move away from Kampala to our rural village. My wife contested my decision, but I insisted and we moved to our rural village Orwadai, about 400km away from Kampala, to try out life there."

Orwadai participates in a food security project supported by World Renew through the Foods Resource Bank (FRB), a Christian nonprofit based in the US that is committed to supporting farming households as they seek long-lasting solutions to hunger. **James was interested.**

"One day I attended a meeting in the village," James remembers, "where emphasis was made for community members to start savings groups. We organized ourselves and formed the Orwadai Farmers Group. **That was the beginning of a turnaround in my family.**"

James and his fellow savings and loan association members attended community trainings facilitated by World Renew and their local partner, the Pentecostal Assemblies of God. One of these trainings involved a "participatory rural appraisal," in which members appraise their community's strengths and needs. "I personally presented the community resource map of Orwadai," says James, "and people laughed at our village map because it showed how poor we were. **I asked God to give me wisdom to change this shame to glory.**"

God gave James the wisdom he asked for and the village savings and loan association enabled him to use that wisdom. The Orwadai community now has their first school, a nursery school with 67 pupils. They have constructed a grass-thatched building with two classrooms and James is the director of the school. "I ran an advertisement for qualified nursery teachers. Suitable candidates turned up for interviews and this marked the



*Mr. Maguma poses with the teachers and pupils of the Orwadai Nursery School*

beginning of the nursery. This year our VSLA group supported our school with 500,000 shillings (\$138) which helped me to buy a black board, chalk, and textbooks, and pay the teachers." **This school is a place of hope for this community.**

Membership in a village savings and loan has not only benefited Orwadai village, but James' own family as well. This year, they planted one acre of ground nuts for family income and two acres of cassava gardens for food at home. "We harvested ground nuts and it earned us 320,000 shillings (\$88), which enabled us to buy a cow for milk," James says proudly.

"Our yearly family savings from the village savings and loan association was 250,000 shillings (\$70)," he continues, "which helped us buy five bags of cement for building an additional room to our small family house. I plan to borrow money from our VSLA group to complete it. **I give glory to God for what He is doing to change our story of shame to a story of glory.**"

James took a risk in moving his family to a rural village. He asked for God's help and found the support he needed right in his very own community. By forming a village savings and loan and taking the time to work together and learn, he and his fellow villagers are making exciting changes in their own families and in their community.

*Mr. Maguma, with his daughter, showing the 2 acres he has planted for home consumption.*

