STORIES FROM KENYAN COMPASSION CENTERS

Meet some of the children who are part of the Compassion Centers you are launching!

Chepotipin Donoo (age 3) lives at home with her two brothers and parents. She is responsible for carrying water. She loves Bible class at church, playing ping pong, and being read to.

James Kakuko (age 4) lives at home with one brother and his parents. He runs errands and enjoys playing games.

Steward Lechipai (age 4) is responsible for running errands. He likes to draw, play hide-and-seek, and clap out rhythms.

Other new COMPASSION CENTERS in Kenya are already changing lives. Within the last year, brand-new centers have reported amazing stories.

- New playgrounds attract kids and families who would have little interest in visiting a church.

- Many children who are part of these projects arrived malnourished, but are now much healthier through the meals they receive at the centers and nutrition training for their parents.

- Through hygiene training, far fewer children are becoming ill with water-related diseases like diarrhea.

- Education has become a much higher priority, with kids attending classes at a Compassion Center, or being able to enroll at local schools through support from their Compassion center.

- Centers are able to provide for specific needs in their communities from new mattresses (so kids can get good sleep) to HIV/AIDS care for family members of sponsored children. One center has even been able to build new homes for several families in desperate need.

- Many centers are able to change their entire communities by providing income-generating opportunities and small business loans and using their new classrooms and resources to teach adult literacy.

- Many parents, as well as children, have become believers in Jesus, and whole families are gaining new hope.
**JACKLINE’S STORY**

Jackline loves to attend school and the Compassion project at KE393. The project gives her the opportunity to lead others in praise and worship and to be taught the word of God, and it provides resources she needs to succeed at school.

The bell rings, marking the end of recess. A thick dust cloud engulfs Gachororo Primary’s schoolyard as sweaty pupils scamper off. A hum settles over the school compound as jovial and jubilant shrieks are replaced by the syncopated shuffling of feet in a mad dash for the classrooms.

It is mid-morning; the sun is overhead and the heat is sweltering.

Class is in session. Triza, the math teacher, is at the helm of the classroom scribbling on the once-black board, now a faded greyish color. The 78 pupils crammed in the 48-square-meter classroom keenly observe her every move.

One student in particular is very attentive. She calls out answers as teacher Triza calculates sums on the blackboard.

Jackline Kakwini Micheal, 11, sits sandwiched in between two students a row from the back. The harsh midday sun’s glare on her face does not deter her from concentrating on the proceedings of the class.

Jackeline’s resolve to fulfill her dream of becoming a teacher is inspired by teacher Triza, her best teacher.

Like most of her classmates, Jackline hails from a very humble background. Her dad is employed at one of the flower farms in Juja, where he earns a monthly income of KSh. 10,000 ($100 USD). Her mother, Regina Mueni, is a housewife who carefully balances her time between seasonally selling vegetables at the local market and providing laundry services to university students around Juja. From her endeavors, she earns about KSh. 500 ($5 USD) a day, which also supplements the family income.

The bell rings again as teacher Triza is issuing homework assignments for the day.

It’s now lunchtime!

Jackline tightly clutches her school bag and heads over to the neighboring class 4S (South).

She scans the class, her eyes slowly becoming accustomed to the darkness. Her face lights up at the sight of John Musyoka, her fraternal twin. He grabs his school bag and heads in her direction.

Jackline and John spend a lot of time together. Every so often, they sit at the same spot on a secluded part of the schoolyard and share niceties while chowing down the day’s meal—usually leftovers from the previous night’s supper.

On this particular day, Jackline is especially excited. It’s her favorite meal on the menu: chapati (Indian-style flatbread made from wheat flour) and beef stew. This is a welcome disruption to the characteristic ugali (cornmeal) and sukuma wiki (Swahili for “push-the-week”), a name the locals have reserved for kale.

Jackline and John seem to be having the time of their life, their legs swaying rhythmically as they converse, only pausing for an occasional chuckle. No sooner are they through with lunch than it is time to go back to class for three final lessons.

It’s 3:30 p.m. in the afternoon, time to head home. The heat has only slightly relented.

John and Jackline are joined at the school’s gate by their youngest brother, Junior, for the brief 10-minute walk home. They make their way home to find their mother eagerly awaiting their arrival.

“I worry a lot when my children and especially Jackline are not at home. I dread that they have to walk home because I do not know what they will see or encounter. Juja has become an urban and vibrant town because of the numerous university students who live here. This has brought with it a barrage of negative influences,” Regina says.
They live in a two-room house. The living room is multipurpose and also serves as the kitchen. A bed sheet partitions yet another segment where a bed has been placed, making it the kids’ bedroom.

“We are not able to live with all our kids here. There is simply no room for all of us. Three of my older daughters stay in the countryside with their grandparents,” she says evenly before giving a deep sigh. “I deeply regret not being able to live with my older children. There is a bond that my husband and I do not have with them. It has not been easy raising our older children. They would always be sent home for not having school fees or proper school uniforms. We decided to relocate to Juja when my husband got a job here, and I thank God for that decision.”

The change had a profound effect on her younger children.

“Things are different now,” she says, beaming with excitement.

Jackline was among the first 150 registered beneficiaries at KE393 Christian Church International (CCI) Joy Family back in 2012, and a burden was lifted off their shoulders twice over, as Jackline and John were both registered.

At CCI Joy Family, the family has received sleeping mattresses, school uniforms, school bags and access to the project’s resource center, which is stocked with textbooks and reading material that the family could otherwise not afford.

Beyond material support, they’ve found mentors and confidants. Tabitha, the project director at KE393, is more than a teacher and authority figure to Jackline—she’s a mentor who inspires her to dream big.

Jackline has grown in confidence and responsibility, as she leads praise and worship during Saturday program devotions.

“She has become very helpful and responsible, and she assists with household chores like washing utensils and tidying up,” says Regina.

Meanwhile, Jackline changes into a bright, flowery, yellow dress with African print, a birthday gift from her Korean sponsor, Kyung E. Kim.

She heads out of the house with her school uniform in a green basin.

“I have to get my uniform clean and dry in readiness for the next day,” she explains as she pours water from a yellow jerry can.

Jackline hangs the uniform on a clothesline made of used copper wire and sits on the empty jerry can to finish knitting a scarf she started a few days ago in anticipation of the cold season. Her brother later joins her and starts knitting his own scarf. As the afternoon breeze sways the wet clothes on the clothesline, Jackline carefully weaves the strands of yarn to produce an intricate, beautiful pattern that has yet to be completed.

Like the scarf, Jackline is being knitted and stitched, and every day of her life will reveal the impact that her parents, the local church, her teachers and sponsor are having in her life.

The family is hopeful. Jackline and her siblings look forward to donning their clean school uniforms the following day and dashing to school before the sound of the bell, which signals the start of a new day!