

Contents:

- ⇒ A Thriving Business!
- ⇒ Comments from Learners
- ⇒ Courses Update
- ⇒ How You Can Be Involved

A THRIVING BUSINESS

by Peter Twycross

In 2015, Agnes, participated in the Business For Life (BFL) Training (*her class pictured below*) in Mara Rianta, a small village just outside of the Masai Mara National Reserve. In the past 2 years she has built her business into a thriving enterprise! As you can see from the photo above, her shop is well stocked and she has a smile on her face.



Agnes moved from Kajiado to Mara Rianta in 2006 hoping for a better life due to the proximity of tourist opportunities in the nearby National Reserve. She started a small restaurant, but the business soon failed. She then worked in a tourist camp, but earned far less than she was hoping for (only \$80 per month). It was then that she heard about the BFL training and was excited to learn all she could about starting and managing a business. She completed the course and particularly valued learning how to calculate her breakeven point and how to determine if and when she was making a profit.

She completed her term as an employee in a kiosk selling solar equipment, adding value to that business, despite being poorly paid. Her dream came true when she started her own business selling clothes and shoes. She was careful to choose a good location with passing pedestrian traffic and sourced her clothes and shoes in the capital city of Nairobi to ensure quality. Her husband gave her \$400 to construct a structure out of corrugated iron sheets for the shop and in two months she was making a profit of \$230 per month. Seeing additional opportunities in the market she started stocking plastic utensils and refrigerated drinks in her shop, which was a novelty in the village due to the recent introduction of electricity.

Continued on the next page



Comments from the learners

"The course stirred the potential in me. The use of technology in business was a great topic!"

Esther Jayo, Kibera

"No more selling on credit. That has been killing my business."

Susan Nabbaale, Uganda

"All areas of a business are critical and nothing should be left unattended."

Annah Navua, Nakuru

"The training has made me realize that you do not have to wait to get a lot of money in order to start a business."

Lilian Achieng, Kibera

"The training will help me run and manage my business well."

Jacinta Mbenya, Nairobi

"This was excellent. The skills will help me start and run my detergent and cleaning equipment business well."

Sharon Chepkorir, Ilula

"This course has given me the direction, ideas and skills required before starting a business! I have learned that in business sometimes one can make losses and profits. Also I learned how to calculate my breakeven point. This is a helpful program."

Joshua Yakobo, Tanzania

"Human Centered Design has helped me learn a lot from this Business For Life Program. I am ready to exploit it to the maximum. after identifying opportunities I will target my customers and make products according to what they want or need. I will also keep good records."

Patrick Kiplagat, Kipkaren

"This program was good. It 'revolutionized' my life! I learned a lot, more so I will run a successful business in future and make more profit. I will use my profit to expand my business!"

Kipruto Obadiah, Ilula

Continued from the previous page

To date Agnes has saved \$3000 and is looking for additional business opportunities. She recently bought a photocopying machine becoming the only person in the village providing that service. Agnes works hard from 7am to 9pm running her shop, but is now looking to employ a manager, so she can focus on expanding her business. She plans to open the first bookshop and the first cyber café in Mara Rianta as well!

Impressed with her progress I asked her "Agnes what has made you successful?" to which she immediately replied with a huge smile "Business for Life!"



Business For Life trainer Dennis Andaye (pictured right) facilitating a discussion in a recent Nairobi training.

The entire class including learners from Uganda and Ethiopia as well as the nearby informal community of Kibera is pictured below.



Courses Update

Empowering Lives Children's Home Graduates



Two courses were held at ELI's Ukweli Training and Development Centre in Ilula in February, involving 32 graduates of the ELI Children's Homes in Ilula and Kipkaren as well as 8 young people from the surrounding villages where ELI works, and one student from Tanzania.

As most of the students were fresh out of secondary school, few had previous business experience. The education system prepares them to get a job, yet there are few jobs to be found in Kenya, especially for youth. Developing the skills necessary for starting up and running a small business is a vital part of their preparation for leaving the children's home and living on their own. The money making activities they began on the training mostly involved selling food items or detergents, but all of them worked on a business model canvas and presented a "pitch" on the businesses they even-



Nairobi Course

The training held in Nairobi during the months of February and March involved a wide range of participants. Most of the learners had either struggling businesses or were first timers in business. The majority of the participants came from disadvantaged economic backgrounds; some were widows and would engage in small business activities to take care of their families.

Six women from a large Nairobi informal settlement called Kibera attended the course. All of them were running businesses, but they never seemed to be able to get beyond survival mode. The skills learned on the training boosted their businesses in a way that they could never have imagined. Grace, (pictured left giving a pitch for her vegetable business) awakes before dawn every morning to select the best vegetables from her supplier and then sell them to her customer. She has always worked hard, but now she is working hard AND working smart.



One learner came to Nairobi from Uganda to participate in the course. Her name is Susan (pictured right) and her business is "Sue's Shoes". Her business had never taken off because of selling on credit and then never being paid. The class also encouraged her to raise her selling price as she had an excellent product in high demand, yet her prices were too low.



The Emerging Leaders trainers brought a team of 5 to the course. Their businesses ranged from selling motorcycle parts to manufacturing vases and other household items from recycled glass bottles. All agreed that the skills gained in researching the market were invaluable to finding a viable opportunity and turning it into a profitable business.

How You Can Be Involved

Because the poor cannot afford to pay for this kind of training, we rely heavily on donor funding and community-based partnerships in order to operate this program.

Each Business For Life Training in Kenya requires approximately \$8000. This amount covers the costs for the training and follow-up of 20-25 learners. Courses outside of Kenya incur additional costs.

Courses thus far have been funded by a variety of organizations including US AID, Compassion Kenya, Compassion Rwanda, The 410 Bridge International, Samaritan's Purse, Hope Alive, Freely in Hope, SIM, Empower Africa, World Vision Rwanda, Comza, Servant Partners, Rehema House, and Sentinel Mara Camp, as well as a number of churches and individuals.

We are looking to expand our network of donors as the demand for the course grows. Donations in US dollars can be sent to Empowering Lives International, P.O. Box 67, Upland, CA 91785-0067 and demarcated for the Business For Life Training. To make a tax-deductible contribution online using your credit card, visit www.empoweringlives.org, click on DONATE, select Training and Development and find "Business For Life" in the drop down menu.

Since your gifts are tax-deductible all funds contributed to ELI are inherently under the control of the board of directors to improve and empower the lives of people living in poverty.

Community Development organizations working in Africa interested in exploring a partnership with us, may call us at +254 735 479152, or +254 721 179061 or email us at businessforlife@empoweringlives.org.



empowering lives | INTERNATIONAL