

Village Impact Report

Volume 14, January — May 2024





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Letter from the CEO

In 2018, I met a woman named Salome who had fled the war in South Sudan with her six children, arriving as refugees in Uganda's Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement with nothing but the clothes on their backs. I could sense her excitement and determination as she talked about launching a business through Village Enterprise, but I had no idea just how successful she would become. Today, Salome is a successful business woman who owns two acres of land, sends all of her children to school, provides for four foster children, and employs up to 15 people during her busy season.

Salome's story of resilience and hope is what drives us at Village Enterprise. We know that entrepreneurship has the power to transform lives, restore dignity, and break intergenerational cycles of extreme poverty in Africa. This is why we are committed to empowering the most vulnerable women, refugees, and youth to become entrepreneurs, launch small businesses and savings groups, and build brighter futures for themselves and their families.

Salome, along with Dawa and Stella—two other extraordinary entrepreneurs living in Bidi Bidi—were recently featured on BBC World Service radio. They are three of the 285,000+ entrepreneurs we've served to date. You can listen to their stories [here](#), and also read the story of Florence, another one of our remarkable entrepreneurs, on page 8 of this report.

The businesses launched by entrepreneurs like Salome, Dawa, Stella, and Florence have transformed the lives of 1.8 million women, men, and children in rural Africa. We have the audacious goal of ending extreme poverty for 20 million people by 2030, and we know that this level of scale and impact is only attainable through collective action. It's by partnering with governments, funders, agencies, and other nonprofits that we can

work together to reach the most vulnerable and better support them on their journeys out of extreme poverty.

Inside the pages of this report, you can find many examples of our collective action efforts. From reducing acute child malnutrition in northern Kenya with Catholic Relief Services as part of USAID Nawiri (page 11) to working with the Government of Rwanda to adopt and scale a poverty graduation model (page 17), we firmly believe it is by working together that we can achieve more.

This is especially important as climate change, conflict, and other shocks continue to push more families in rural Africa into extreme poverty. With these challenges in mind, you can learn more about how we are driving climate resilience for populations vulnerable to climate change (page 11), partnering to safeguard protected ecosystems and endangered species (page 12), and, in collaboration with Mercy Corps, proving there's a better, more sustainable way to support refugees (page 14).

I'm so proud of all that our stunning team has accomplished so far in 2024, and we're grateful to all of our donors, partners, and friends who have helped make this impact possible.

On behalf of the entire Village Enterprise team, thank you for your steadfast support and helping to end extreme poverty in rural Africa.



Dianne Calvi
CEO & President



Who We Are

We believe in the power of entrepreneurship to end extreme poverty.

Our poverty graduation program empowers the most vulnerable women, refugees, and youth in rural Africa to become entrepreneurs, launch small businesses, and break intergenerational cycles of extreme poverty.

We provide comprehensive support to holistically address the root causes of poverty, making sure our entrepreneurs have the resources and skills they need to continue thriving long after they graduate out of extreme poverty. Our cost-effective model includes business education and financial literacy training, access to a savings group, startup cash, business mentorship, and market linkages. We also provide our entrepreneurs with specialized training on gender equity, leadership, climate-smart agriculture, and conservation.

Equipped with everything they need to establish sustainable livelihoods, our entrepreneurs are more resilient to the shocks of climate change, displacement, conflict, and other emergencies. As a result of their increased income and savings, they can begin investing in the things that really matter—housing, education, nutrition, healthcare, and building brighter futures for themselves and their families.



Our Impact to Date

83% of our entrepreneurs are women



287,612

Entrepreneurs
trained



86,958

Businesses
launched



6,572

Business savings
groups started



1,805,245

Lives impacted



Note: In the Village Enterprise model, businesses are typically launched by groups of three entrepreneurs.

Our Impact

A closer look at a recent cohort of entrepreneurs



Understanding the Data

Because of the one-year nature of our program and our commitment to ensuring accurate data, key outputs and outcomes become available just over one year after a cohort enters our poverty graduation program. Below is the most recent data from our cohort of entrepreneurs who entered our program in July 2022 and graduated in June 2023 in Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda.*

Key Outputs		Key Outcomes	
Newly reached villages	371	Average BSG savings at endline	\$2,873
Entrepreneurs trained	17,088	Average % increase in household savings	479%
Lives impacted	108,540	Average increase in household savings	\$71 (from \$15 to \$86)
Training sessions provided	5,096	Average % increase in consumption & expenditure (C&E)	51%
Businesses started	7,884	Average increase in annual per capita household C&E	\$119 (from \$234 to \$353)
Business savings groups (BSG) established	574	Average increase in weekly animal protein intake	94%
% of women participants	82%	Average increase in daily meal consumption	18.1%

* Ethiopia data is not included in this table because Village

Enterprise was not launched in the country in June 2022.



Photo credit:
The Life You Can Save

How We've Grown



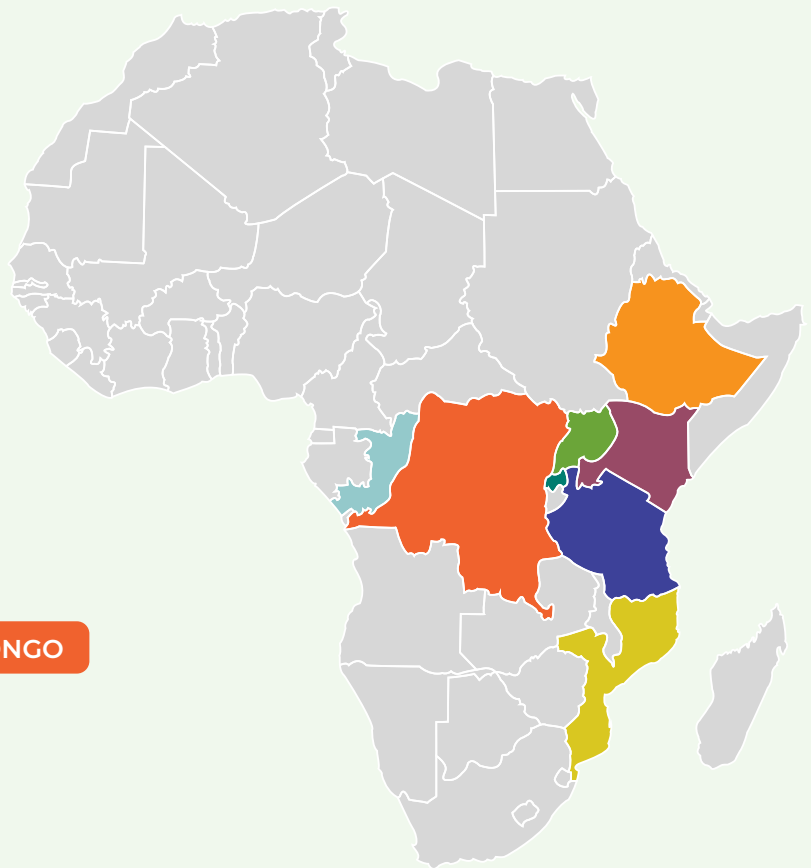
A lot can happen in five years! Through strategic partnerships and collective action, we're rapidly scaling across Africa and building a world-class, proximate team to lead the way.

	2019	2024
Countries of operation	4	8
Staff	153	539
Lives impacted to date	1,000,000	1,805,245

Check out how we've grown!

Our Countries of Operation

- KENYA
- UGANDA
- RWANDA
- ETHIOPIA
- MOZAMBIQUE
- DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
- CONGO-BRAZZAVILLE
- TANZANIA





Florence's Story



When Florence was 17, she had to drop out of school because her family couldn't afford the fees. Now, as a new business owner, she's paying her own way through school.

After a long day of studying for her upcoming exams at school, Florence doesn't go home.

Instead, she races to her friend's house where she picks up the latest batch of freshly baked beignets, straps them to the back of her bike, and roams the community markets looking for customers. Once she's sold out of the day's stock, Florence still doesn't go home. She heads back to her friend's house to record her transactions, debrief the day's business, and help her friends bake more to sell tomorrow.

This isn't what Florence had imagined being a teenager would be like—working on top of being a full-time student—but she's determined to graduate from secondary school. And if being a business owner is what it takes, then she's rolling up her sleeves and getting to work.

At 17, Florence had to drop out of secondary school because her parents couldn't afford her school fees. Living in a rural community in the remote parts of northern Rwanda, Florence's story is not uncommon. The lack of economic opportunities in the area, along with the ongoing impacts of climate change and global inflation, have pushed many households into extreme poverty and made it almost impossible to get back out.

"When I had to drop out of school because of poverty, I completely lost the hope of life," Florence says. "But when I saw this opportunity through Village Enterprise,

I thought to myself, 'Maybe I will rise again.'"

At 18, Florence enrolled in Village Enterprise's poverty graduation program. She learned how to operate a business, keep financial records, look for market opportunities, and practice weekly savings. When the time came to launch her first business, Florence reached out to two women in the program who had recently graduated from secondary school. She was nervous they wouldn't want to partner with her, since she hoped to eventually re-enroll in school and wouldn't be available to help with business during the day.

But the women—Francine, 22, and Veneranda, 24—immediately empathized with her situation and wanted to help. As Eric Iragendanwa, the area's Field Associate for Village Enterprise, puts it, "They showed her Ubuntu."

After noticing there weren't any bakeries in the area and recognizing they could fill a market gap, the trio of new entrepreneurs got to work. Using their business grant from Village Enterprise and under guidance from Redempta Uwase, their business mentor, they started small with a few bags of ingredients and a small liter of oil. Traveling by foot or paying for motorcycle taxis to take them to nearby markets, they began selling Rwandan staples they knew would be popular—donuts, beignets, chapati, mandazi, and samosas.

It came as no surprise their baked goods were an instant hit.

Word began spreading about the new bakery and they started receiving phone calls from far away villages. Realizing they could tap into additional markets but worried the transportation fees would severely cut into their profits, they came up with an innovative solution. After putting aside some of their weekly profits and pooling their savings together, Florence, Francine, and Veneranda bought a bike for 120,000 RWF (\$93 USD).

And just like that, they created a mobile bakery.

Up and down, over hills and into valleys, Florence and her business partners take turns riding their bike and selling baked goods in the area's widespread markets and villages. Rwanda is known as the land of a thousand hills, and the nickname is no exaggeration. The rolling green hills are everywhere and, one would imagine, difficult to climb on a bike strapped full of beignets. When asked about the mammoth size of Rwandan hills and how hard it must be to ride up them, Florence smiles and shrugs. "I want to get out of poverty as quickly as possible," she says.

At 19, just over one year after being forced to drop

out, Florence enrolled back into school. She used her business profits to pay the school fees herself, and she even bought a brand new school uniform, too. The sense of pride that radiates from Florence is unmistakable.

"I am proud of myself knowing that the future is in my own hands," says Florence.

By day she studies in school, and in the afternoons and on weekends she helps Francine and Veneranda with their shared business duties. They've become a team that tackles everything together and are excited about what the future holds.

With just two years left in school, Florence is more determined than ever to cross that finish line. And once she graduates secondary school, she's climbing her next big hill—university. She hopes to study project management to continue growing their businesses and profits. She dreams that one day, when she has children, they will always have access to education and will never have to worry about school fees.

"Thank you Village Enterprise for giving me a second chance to secure my future," says Florence. "This business has changed my entire life."



Veneranda, Francine, and Florence with their mobile bakery in northern Rwanda

Key Initiatives

to end extreme poverty in Africa



In order to end extreme poverty once and for all, we must address its many root causes.

Through partnerships with NGOs, governments, United Nations agencies, and private sector companies, we provide our entrepreneurs with a holistic program that goes beyond economic empowerment to ensure they have everything they need to navigate climate change, inflation, conflict, gender inequities, lack of access to digital technology, and other challenges. **Read on to learn more about our key initiatives.**



An entrepreneur with a goat she was able to purchase using the profits from her business



Driving Climate Resilience

Women's Economic Empowerment through Climate-Smart Agriculture (WEE-CSA)

In April, our WEE-CSA project wrapped up after three years of close collaboration with UN Women and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Funded by Korea International Cooperation Agency, this project trained women in regionally-specific, climate-smart agricultural practices—such as forest utilization, drought-resistant seeds, and land use management—on top of our business curriculum and mentorship. By layering these two important topics onto our poverty graduation approach, women were equipped with the knowledge and skills to launch sustainable agribusinesses that can thrive despite changing weather patterns. The businesses are helping these women entrepreneurs become financially self-reliant and build their incomes and savings—all of which makes them more resilient to the ongoing challenges of climate change.

In total, our partnership trained 809 entrepreneurs (87% of whom were women), launched 269 businesses, and impacted 5,380 lives. Village Enterprise also worked with the West Pokot County Government to develop their first-ever gender policy to ensure greater equity in the county. In a region where women have historically not had access to business opportunities and have to rely on their husbands, this was a significant step toward creating a more gender-inclusive society.

USAID Nawiri – Reducing Acute Child Malnutrition in Northern Kenya

To reduce the chronic rates of acute child malnutrition in the pastoralist communities of northern Kenya, Village Enterprise continues to empower households to launch businesses and break the intergenerational cycles of extreme poverty. Funded by USAID and implemented in partnership with Catholic Relief Services, USAID Nawiri layers Village Enterprise's poverty graduation program with health and nutrition education and counseling, social and behavioral change components, and unconditional cash transfers for purchasing necessary food, medicine, and medical care.

Through USAID Nawiri, Village Enterprise has trained 16,130 entrepreneurs, launched 5,455 businesses, established 550 business savings groups, and transformed 96,780 lives. Additionally, among our most recently graduated cohort of entrepreneurs, the number of households with malnourished children reduced from 32% at the start of our program to just 4% at exit.

As parents are better able to provide for their children using their business profits, children are recovering from malnutrition, eating healthier and more nutrient rich meals, and returning to school as healthy and happy students.



Village Enterprise on Kenya NTV!

Check out Village Enterprise's Leah Okero and Mercy Tumkou on NTV Kenya! Alongside partners from FAO and the West Pokot County Government, Leah and Mercy share more about driving climate resilience for female farmers and how it's transforming West Pokot. [Watch the program.](#)



Protecting the Environment

Poverty Alleviation and Removal of Kibale Snares (PARKS)

On Earth Day, we announced some exciting news—Village Enterprise was awarded new funding from the Arcus Foundation to expand our work in Kibale National Park, Uganda! This funding builds off the success we've had reducing extreme poverty in the area, while simultaneously protecting one of the largest remaining populations of endangered East African chimpanzees. By equipping households to launch their own businesses, they're able to build sustainable livelihoods that don't rely on illegal hunting or lumbering to provide for their families. Together, this approach is reducing extreme poverty in the area, safeguarding endangered chimpanzees, and protecting vital ecosystems.

Over the past three years on the PARKS project, Village Enterprise has trained 3,823 entrepreneurs in the Kibale National Park area (63% of whom are women), launched 1,077 businesses, and impacted more than 20,000 lives. Additionally, 824 hunting snares have already been removed from the park. The new funding will allow Village Enterprise to expand to new communities in this region, train nearly 2,000 more entrepreneurs, and transform the lives of over 12,000 women, men, and children living in extreme poverty. We'll also continue to partner with the Ngogo Chimpanzee Project to remove snares and actively patrol the park.

To learn more about PARKS and to read the stories of two extraordinary entrepreneurs, check out our blog!

[Read our blog](#)

Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)

In Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park in Congo-Brazzaville and Okapi Wildlife Reserve in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Village Enterprise is working with WCS to reduce poaching and protect endangered wildlife. By equipping communities with the tools and resources to launch their own businesses, households no longer have to rely on harmful practices to earn a living. As this collaboration wraps up in both countries in June, the project's impact is already evident. Patrols in the parks have reported reduced lumbering and poaching, and several entrepreneurs have shared how their lives have changed as well—not only have they been able to use their business profits to send their children to school, but they have been able to afford medical care now that they have disposable income. To date, this collaborative project has trained 1,896 entrepreneurs, launched 632 businesses, and impacted 13,272 lives in Congo-Brazzaville and the DRC.



An okapi in the DRC — Courtesy of the Wildlife Conservation Society
Global Okapi Conservation Project



A bonobo in the DRC
© 2019 JABRUSON, Arcus Foundation Project

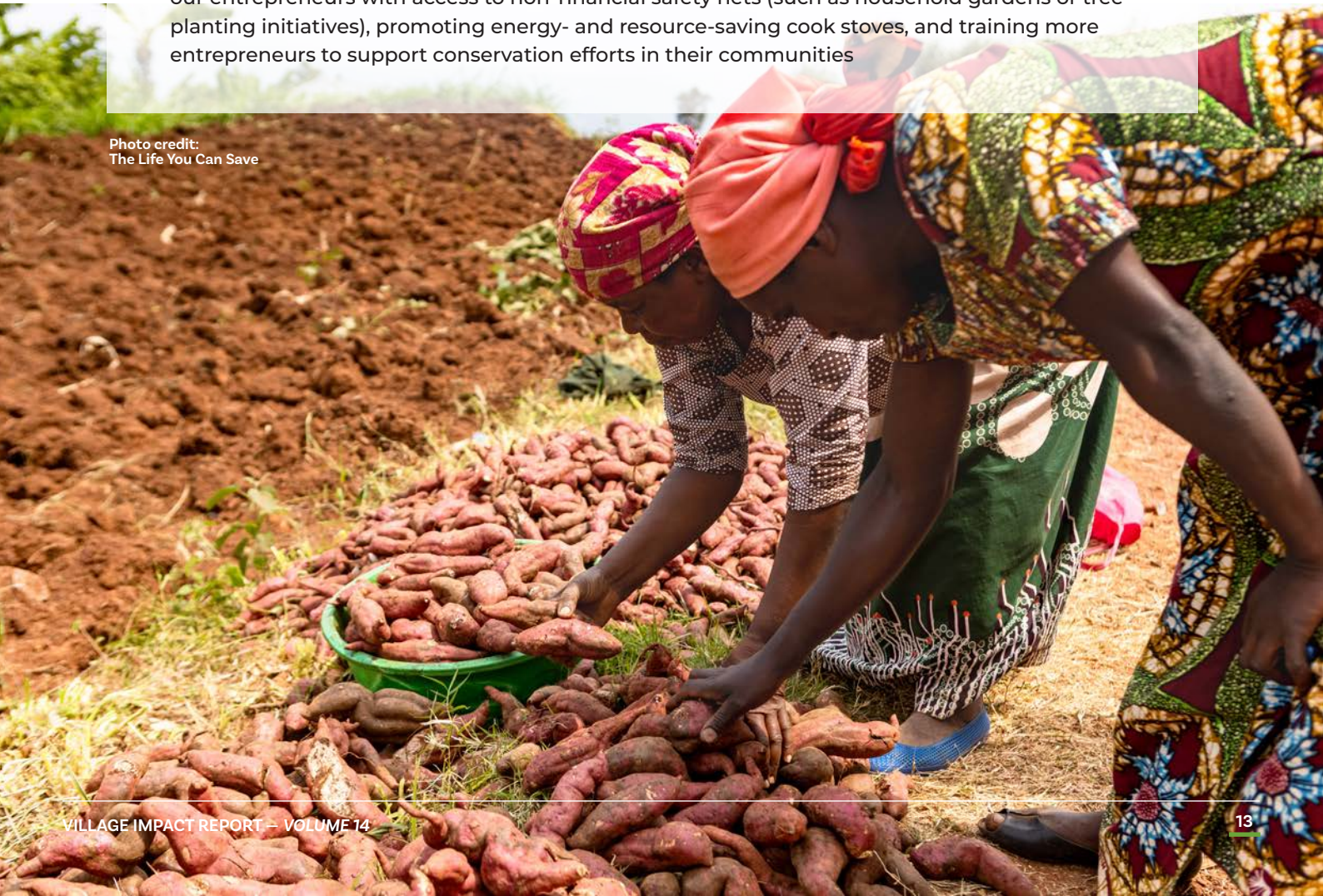
African Wildlife Foundation (AWF)

Village Enterprise and AWF recently wrapped up a project to reduce extreme poverty and protect the bonobo population in the Lomako Reserve of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since the project primarily worked with poachers and those involved in hunting bushmeat, many participants surrendered their hunting guns and animal traps as they launched their own sustainable businesses. As perceptions on conservation and the importance of protecting bonobos grew, so did the relationships between these communities and park officials. Our entrepreneurs also reported being able to eat a balanced diet and an increased number of meals per day. In total, this project trained 1,560 entrepreneurs, launched 520 businesses, transformed 10,920 lives, and helped safeguard the region's endangered bonobos.

What's next for our climate and conservation work?

Even though people living in Africa have contributed the least to carbon emissions, they are disproportionately impacted by the devastating effects of climate change. In order to truly end extreme poverty in rural Africa and ensure our entrepreneurs don't fall back into extreme poverty, we must equip them to build resilience to climate change. By contextualizing our climate-focused modules for specific regions and geographies, hiring business mentors with agriculture backgrounds, and consulting with expert agronomists, Village Enterprise will continue to test, adapt, and enhance our program with added components. Some of these include connecting our entrepreneurs with access to non-financial safety nets (such as household gardens or tree planting initiatives), promoting energy- and resource-saving cook stoves, and training more entrepreneurs to support conservation efforts in their communities

Photo credit:
The Life You Can Save





Supporting Refugees and Vulnerable Populations through DREAMS

Delivering Resilient Enterprises and Market Systems (DREAMS) is a unique partnership that combines Village Enterprise's poverty graduation program with [Mercy Corps'](#) expertise in market systems development (MSD). While Village Enterprise empowers refugees to become entrepreneurs and launch small businesses and savings groups, Mercy Corps enhances existing markets and local economies. Together, this approach ensures that even in the most difficult environments, such as refugee settlements, our entrepreneurs' newly established businesses will thrive and families can graduate out of extreme poverty for good.

After a successful pilot, DREAMS launched in refugee settlements in northern Uganda in 2022. It has since taken off—expanding to serve more refugees and other vulnerable populations living in extreme poverty in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania. DREAMS was also the recipient of *Fast Company's* 2023 World Changing Ideas Award and a 2021 winner of the Larsen Lam ICONIQ Impact Award for Refugees managed by Lever for Change.

Check out the next page for country-specific updates about DREAMS!

DREAMS was on the BBC

Village Enterprise was recently featured on BBC World Service radio! Dawa, Salome, and Stella—three extraordinary refugees who have become entrepreneurs through DREAMS—shared their stories on the BBC Business Daily radio program, alongside interviews with Village Enterprise CEO Dianne Calvi and Victoria Strokova of the Partnership for Economic Inclusion.

[Listen to the episode](#)

Want to partner with us on DREAMS?

Our goal is to continue scaling this award-winning model into new regions and countries with our partners at Mercy Corps in order to transform the lives of refugees and other vulnerable populations living in extreme poverty. DREAMS is currently set to transform 330,000 lives across East Africa, but it has the potential to go even further and transform millions of lives.

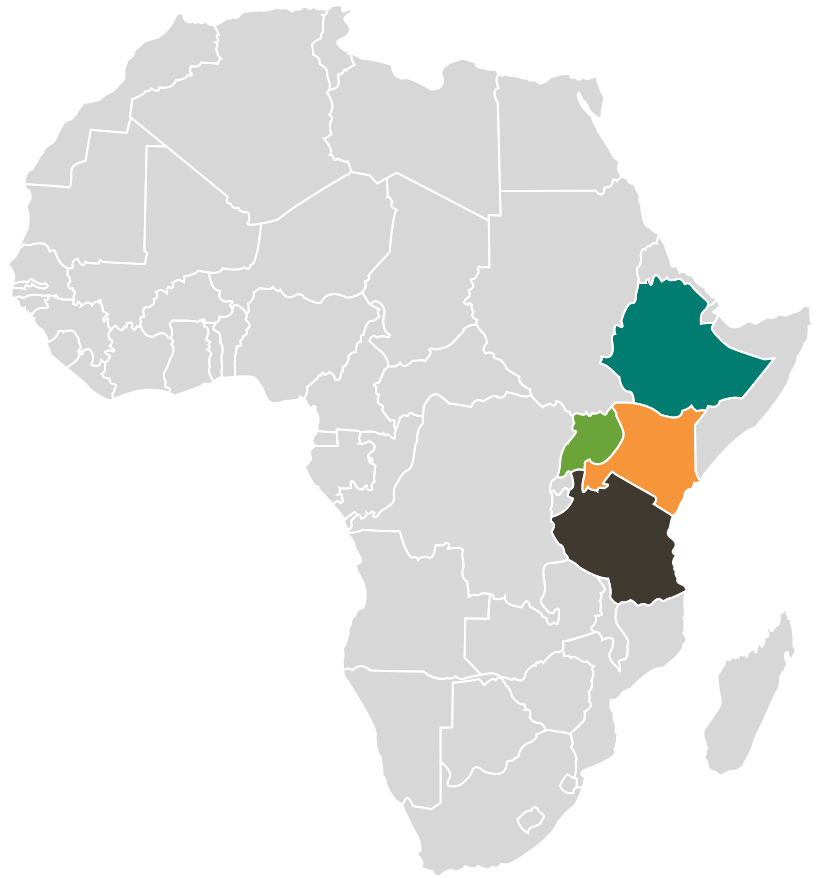
If you are interested in learning more or supporting DREAMS, please contact:

Winnie Auma, Chief Program Officer at Village Enterprise: winniea@villageenterprise.org

DREAMS – Country Updates

ETHIOPIA

In late 2023, DREAMS launched in three refugee settlements in Dollo Ado, Ethiopia. Funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the IKEA Foundation, DREAMS targets refugees from Somalia and host community members living in extreme poverty in the Kobe, Hilaweyn, and Melkadida refugee settlements. Since then, with funding from USAID, DREAMS also began targeting non-displaced populations living in extreme poverty in the highlands of Ethiopia. Between the two projects, DREAMS will train 28,800 entrepreneurs, launch 9,600 businesses, and impact 192,000 lives in Ethiopia.



KENYA

With generous support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, DREAMS is expanding to work with households living in extreme poverty in Garissa County, Kenya. As DREAMS launches in Garissa, it is set to train 720 entrepreneurs, launch 240 businesses, and impact 4,800 lives in Kenya.

TANZANIA

Funded by the generosity of an anonymous donor, DREAMS is expanding to Tanzania this year to work with naturalized citizens who were previously refugees from Burundi. In the coming years, DREAMS will train 8,000 entrepreneurs, launch 2,600 businesses, and impact 53,000 lives in Tanzania.

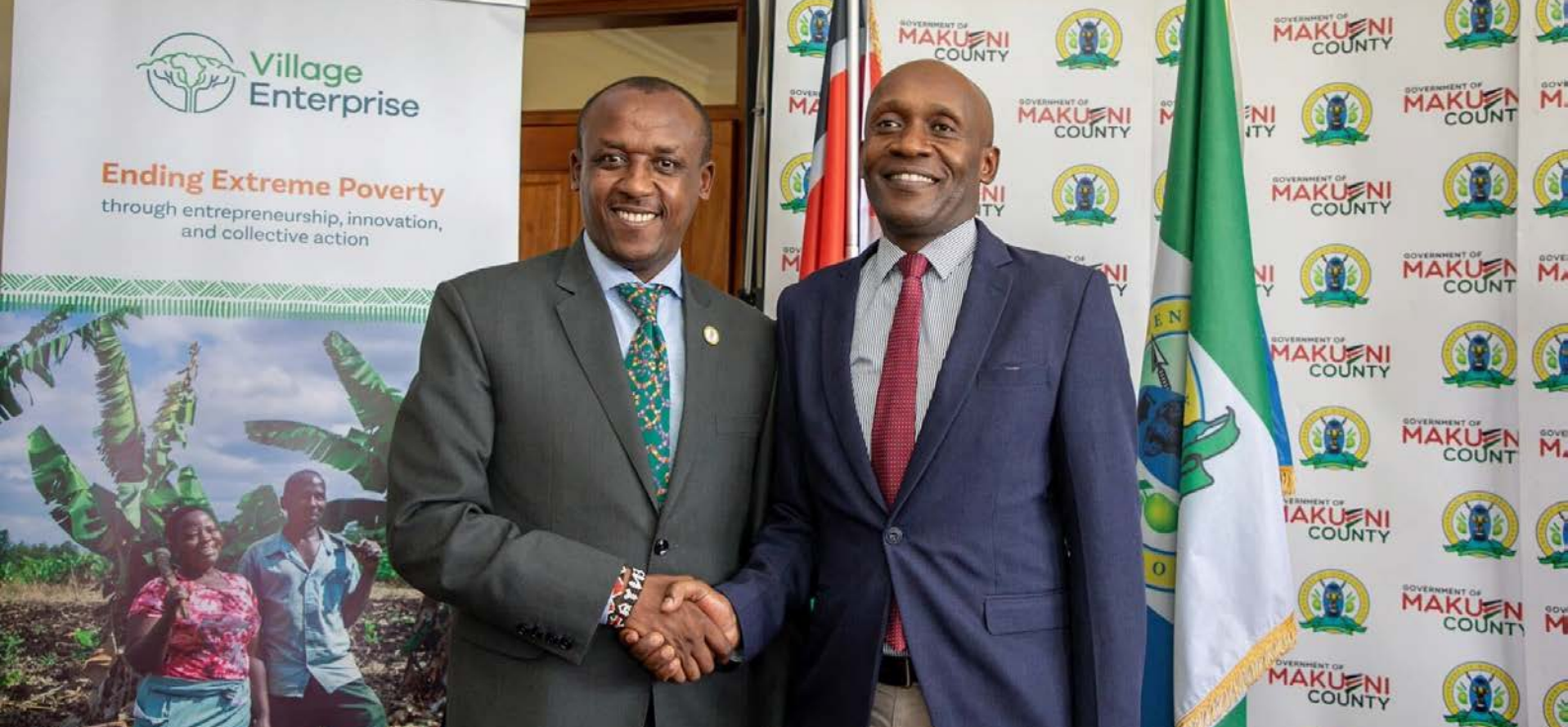
UGANDA

First launched in Uganda, DREAMS continues to build off its success and work with refugees and host communities living in the Bidi Bidi and Rhino Camp refugee settlements. In total, DREAMS will train 12,000 entrepreneurs, launch 4,000 businesses, and impact 80,000 lives in Uganda.

An entrepreneur from Uganda's Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement with chickens from her poultry business



Photo credit:
Jumba Martin for Mercy Corps



Partnering with Governments

New Strategic Initiatives in Kenya

In February, we were delighted to announce that Village Enterprise received a \$1.5 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for two new strategic initiatives in Kenya!

As a result of the funding, Village Enterprise has signed memorandums of understanding with three county governments—Makueni, Taita Taveta, and West Pokot. Our work with these governments will include collaboratively developing and implementing clear poverty graduation policies, building the capacity of government officials to manage graduation programs, and developing an integrated monitoring system to efficiently track entrepreneur progress and success. This is a significant milestone signaling the buy-in of local governments to address extreme poverty using our model. The funding will also enable Village Enterprise to pilot DREAMS in Garissa County. This will be the first time DREAMS is implemented in Kenya.

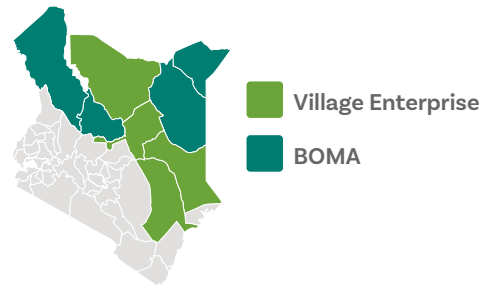
These strategic initiatives will lay the groundwork for county governments to independently manage and scale graduation programs in Kenya, as well as demonstrate how DREAMS could be replicated, adapted, and scaled across sub-Saharan Africa to reach many vulnerable populations living in extreme poverty.

Read our press release to learn more!

[Press Release](#)

Kuza Jamii

The Kuza Jamii project, which is Swahili for *Transforming Communities*, is launching in 2024 and will support the Government of Kenya to increase the socio-economic empowerment and resilience of households living in extreme poverty through the poverty graduation approach. Funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and led by BOMA, the project will reach 17,000 households across eight counties in Kenya. Village Enterprise will work with households in the following counties: Garissa, Isiolo, Marsabit, and Tana River.



Scaling Sustainable Poverty Graduation in Rwanda

This past November, we announced that USAID's Development Innovation Ventures (DIV) awarded \$6.5 million to Village Enterprise to scale our model in partnership with the Government of Rwanda in four counties in northern Rwanda. The award was DIV's largest grant in over a decade and their second largest grant ever.

We're excited to share that the first cohort of entrepreneurs from this project recently launched their businesses in March! To mark this milestone, households gathered in Rulindo District to celebrate the startup cash transfers for more than 3,500 entrepreneurs. With many Village Enterprise staff in attendance, along with the Director General of the Local Administrative Entities Development Agency Claudine Nyinawagaga and the Mayor of Rulindo Judith Mukanyirigira, it was a truly special moment to witness. As hundreds of entrepreneurs' phones rang with notifications that they successfully received their business grant via mobile money transfer, the joy and excitement was unmatched!

Through our work with the Government of Rwanda, and with funding from USAID, we're aiming to transform more than 205,000 lives in the next three years and help end extreme poverty in the country by 2030.

“Before I didn’t think doing business was possible. I had the passion to work, but I didn’t have the capital to launch my own business. But now that I am an entrepreneur, I already have big plans to scale my irish potato business.”

—Doracella from Ruhanga Village, Rwanda (pictured below). She recently launched a business through our work in Rwanda funded by USAID.





Innovating with Technology

Increased Savings through DreamSave

The DreamSave app, created by our partners DreamStart Labs, is an innovative way for our entrepreneurs to digitally track their business savings group (BSG) records using their smartphones instead of paper books. Back in 2022, we launched a pilot testing out this app in 12 BSGs across Uganda, Rwanda, and Kenya, and we found DreamSave increased weekly attendance at BSG meetings, made the meetings shorter and more efficient, and helped our entrepreneurs to save more.

DreamSave stores entrepreneurs' savings securely in the cloud and sends mobile notifications reminding entrepreneurs of their weekly savings targets. These features have helped foster a culture of savings in our BSGs and boosted their trust of accurate record keeping. As a result, these groups have recorded an average 50% increase in savings and 85% increase in meeting attendance, according to data gathered by Village Enterprise's technology team. Village Enterprise has already scaled the use of DreamSave to 72 additional BSGs with a long-term goal of having all BSGs using the app by 2025.

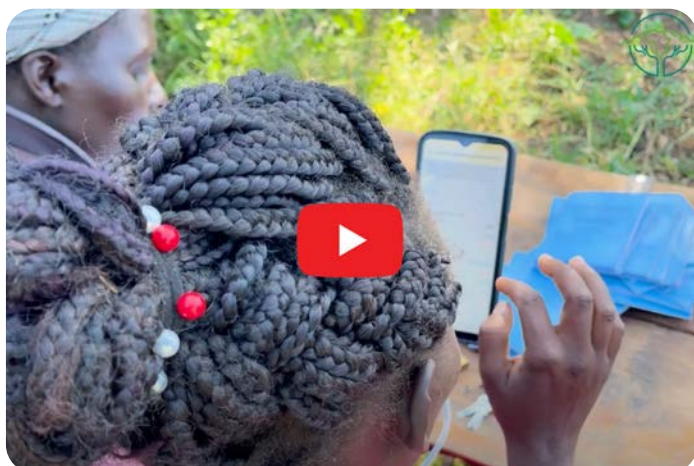
To learn more about DreamSave and how it's impacted our entrepreneurs, check out our blog or watch this short video!

[Read our blog](#)

[Watch our video](#)



Group officials record savings into the DreamSave app during a business savings group meeting in West Pokot, Kenya.





Pioneering Innovative Financing

Village Enterprise is proud to be a leader in innovative financing in the international development and poverty alleviation sectors.

We believe that international development should focus on life-changing impact and results. But it's surprising how little that actually happens. Too often, international development funding is tied to activities and receipts. This incentivizes reporting and compliance rather than innovation and impact. But we have a simple solution: results-based financing. Results-based financing ties outcomes and results directly to funding. Not only is this a more efficient use of funding, but it allows NGOs and nonprofits to focus on achieving transformative impact as they work to solve the world's biggest problems.

Funding Impact through Common Good Marketplace (CGM)

Village Enterprise is working on an exciting innovative financing opportunity with Common Good Marketplace. Similar to how carbon credits operate, this platform will allow corporations to fund Village Enterprise's social impact and progress to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. In order for this to happen, Village Enterprise's impact must first be audited and verified. With generous support from the Outcomes Accelerator to fund this rigorous audit, Village Enterprise is currently in the final stages of this process and hopes to start selling our verified impact on Common Good Marketplace in the coming months.



An entrepreneur selling produce and other household items at her business in Murang'a, Kenya



COMMON GOOD
MARKETPLACE



Outcomes Accelerator

If you are interested in partnering with us on innovative financing, please contact:

Celeste Brubaker, Chief of Impact and Innovative Financing: celesteb@villageenterprise.org

Senior Leadership & Board of Directors Retreat



In February, Village Enterprise held its first-ever Senior Management Team & Board of Directors retreat in beautiful Kigali, Rwanda. While the focus of the retreat was to discuss the progress we've made on ending extreme poverty and start shaping our next three-year, rolling strategic plan, it was also a time of connection. Our board members were able to see our program in action in Rwanda and meet some of our extraordinary entrepreneurs, as well as connect with the Senior Management Team. It was an inspiring and energizing week, and we are carrying the momentum forward as we are working to finalize our strategic plan.



Meet Our Country Leaders



Behind the scenes, our country leaders are passionately leading our teams to new heights and even greater impact. Get to know these extraordinary leaders and why they're driven to end extreme poverty.



Leah Okero,

Kenya Country Director

What inspires you in your work at Village Enterprise?

Witnessing the transformative power of our interventions, I am driven by the profound impact we have in uplifting lives and bringing hope to those who need it most. Every smile on the faces of the people we serve reaffirms the importance of our work and fuels my passion to continue striving for positive change. I am inspired by the opportunity to be part of a team dedicated to empowering individuals to break the cycle of poverty, to build sustainable livelihoods, and to create brighter futures for themselves and their families.

John Ilima,

Uganda Country Director

Which of Village Enterprise's values resonates the most with you and why?

Integrity is my foremost core value. It embodies who I am as a person and shapes my interactions with others and the world around me. Integrity allows me to navigate life and work at Village Enterprise with authenticity, dignity, and a clear conscience; I have found it invaluable in cultivating trustful relationships, fostering a culture of transparency, and upholding ethical standards in everything we do at Village Enterprise.





Hana Alem,

Ethiopia Program Director

As Village Enterprise’s newest country of operation, what are your hopes for our work in Ethiopia?

My hope is that Village Enterprise will be pivotal in spearheading initiatives to address both the symptoms and root causes of poverty. In doing so, more women, refugees, and youth will be economically empowered, there will be better food security across the country from innovative agricultural practices, and we can build a more equitable, sustainable, and prosperous future for all Ethiopians.

Sylvere Mwizerwa,

Rwanda Country Manager

Why does Village Enterprise’s mission of ending extreme poverty matter to you?

Around the world and especially in Rwanda, poverty strips individuals of their basic human dignity by depriving them of opportunities for education, healthcare, and basic necessities. Ending extreme poverty ensures that every individual can live a life of dignity where they can reach their full potential. Children can go to school, mothers won’t die in childbirth, and everyone can pursue their dreams. This is a mission worthy of contributing to.





New Staff Hires

Ethiopia

- Ahmed Mohamed Omer, Product & Services Lead
- Hana Alem Tekle, Ethiopia Program Director
- Ismael Adan Abdulahi, MEL Coordinator
- Jamal Daud Abdulle, Finance & Administration Associate
- Kalid Ahmed Jabir, IT Coordinator

Kenya

- Alphonse Odwar, Field Associate
- David Lokorwasia, Roaming Business Mentor
- Ephie Odongo, Senior Enumerator
- Erick Opiyo, Senior Enumerator
- Geoffrey Magak, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Coordinator
- Hamdu Aden, County Lead-Garissa
- Irene Chemelei, Roaming Business Mentor
- Isa Fecha, Field Associate
- Job Osewe, Regional Safeguarding Officer

- John Ochieng, Project Manager - Policy & Advocacy
- Joshua Ogembo, People & Culture Manager
- Kevin Mwanza, Senior Communications Manager
- Meshach Lekenit, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, & Learning Coordinator
- Nancy Shikuri, Field Associate
- Penina Olum, Director, Business Development
- Solomon Ngolenyong, Roaming Business Mentor
- Vivian Bwana, MEL Coordinator
- Business Mentors:
 - Adelaide Kiptalam
 - Amina Kunyo
 - Amos Wambille
 - Andrew Malala
 - Anne Akoth
 - Bill Juma
 - Charity Wangila
 - Collins Odero
 - Dorine Odhiambo
 - Eliza Lolkinyati
 - Emmanuel Nganga
 - Eunice Kiombe

- Evans Ngeso
- Gloria Juma
- Gumato Okotu
- Halima Aden
- Hassan Bile
- Jerusa Ateka
- Joel Galhaille
- Judith Otieno
- Lilian Madadi
- Lilian Mbimwa
- Lydia Majuma
- Mohamed Bulle
- Mourine Ouma
- Paul Riwomuk
- Rael Ongaki
- Renny Otieno
- Sarah Chepkemoi
- Shamsa Dukow
- Susan Chemsto
- Sylvia Chepkorir
- Vivian Wanzofu

Rwanda

- Cecile Niyimenya, Field Associate
- Esther Ishimwe, Regional Manager

- Jean Pierre Sibomana, DIV Project Director
- Jeanine Musabyemariya, Office Assistant
- Joseph Mudenge, Vice President, Monitoring, Evidence, and Learning
- Uwera Mireille, Product and Service Coordinator
- Business Mentors:
 - Alice Uwera
 - Anaclet Muhire
 - Clementine Byukusenge
 - Delphine Uyisenga
 - Florentine Rukundo
 - Gaspard Muganga
 - Haruna Hitiyise
 - Janvier Ingabire
 - Jean Claude Gapfizi
 - Jean Nzayisenga
 - Jonas Niyogakiza

- Lameck Manishimwe
- Marie Claire Usanase
- Marthe Nyirahabimana
- Moise Nzabamwita
- Ntirushwa Thierry Rukundo
- Peace Busingye
- Providence Abahuje
- Providence Ingabire
- Renatha Kanzayire
- Theogene Niyosenga

- Nancy Ayoo, Office Assistant
- Paul Mike Anywar, Information Technology Coordinator
- Sunday Edema, Driver
- Business Mentors:
 - David Bida
 - George Okello
 - Habert Mutegeki
 - Judith Happiness
 - Ketty Akot
 - Luka Olwoch
 - Sarah Adoch

Uganda

- Claire Okuferu, Project Manager
- Fahad Jumba, Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Manager
- Hawa Kagoya, Government Relations Officer
- Julius Okello, Finance and Administration Manager
- Mercy Angela Nantongo, Digital Product Manager

USA

- James Phelan, Vice President of Philanthropy
- Joelle Swarner, Executive Assistant & Office Manager
- Vautralise Dunlap, Senior Accountant

Want to join our team?

[View our open positions](#)



Linnet Ayuma: Celebrating 20 Years with Village Enterprise



As the longest-running employee at Village Enterprise, Linnet Ayuma recently celebrated a huge milestone—20 years of unwavering dedication and hard work to Village Enterprise’s mission of ending extreme poverty in rural Africa. To celebrate, we asked Linnet to share some of her story, along with a few of her favorite memories from the past 20 years.

Q: What’s your current position, and what do you enjoy most about it?

A: Currently, I am the Finance and Administration Manager for Kenya and I am very passionate about what Village Enterprise does as an organization. As the Finance and Administration Manager, I may not directly interact with the entrepreneurs we work with, but just ensuring these entrepreneurs are supported and receive the seed capital to start their businesses to change their lives is so fulfilling.

Q: How have you seen Village Enterprise change over the past 20 years?

A: I have witnessed Village Enterprise grow all along the way. This is by having different strategic plans that led to its growth. When I joined Village Enterprise

we were only three staff in Kenya (Country Director, Assistant Country Director, and myself). During that time we used to have volunteer business mentors who were engaged when funds were available. Now we have over 300 employed staff just in Kenya, multiple departments, and digital technology that has made Village Enterprise stand out. Village Enterprise started operating in a small office, but now we have three offices across Kenya located in different regions to reach those who live in extreme poverty and make their lives better.

Q: You’ve experienced and accomplished so much over the past 20 years, but do you have a favorite memory from work that stands out? Or an experience that was particularly meaningful?

A: One day we went for grant disbursement, and we had a female entrepreneur who shared her story that really touched me. She was a widow and after her husband passed on, nobody in the community wanted to associate with her—they perceived her to be a beggar. She was lonely, and she had lost hope in life. Village Enterprise went to work in that community and through Village Enterprise’s program, she made friends and they worked together to run their business so that they could earn a living. She was able to sustain herself and her children, and no longer needed to beg. The community that had isolated her now embraced her. Her story really touched me and motivated me to continue working with Village Enterprise and ensure that if there is another woman out there experiencing the same, then we can give her hope again.

To read the rest of Linnet’s interview, check out our blog!



[Read our blog](#)



In the Press

Village Enterprise is making headlines! Click the articles and media below to see what people are saying about our work to end extreme poverty in Africa.



Kibale Park communities get Shs 1.7bn for chimpanzee conservation

The Independent — April 29, 2024

Women's Economic Empowerment through Climate-Smart Agriculture

Kenya NTV — April 24, 2024



Uganda's refugee women turned entrepreneurs

BBC World Service — May 13, 2024

Dianne Calvi, President & CEO Village Enterprise: Full bellies and big dreams!

The Charity CEO Podcast – May 6, 2024



How 1,200 Refugees in Ethiopia Are Becoming Business Owners

Triple Pundit – March 12, 2024

18 women share what feminism means to them this International Women's Day

CityAM – March 8, 2024

Practical Bravery: EMPOWERED ENTERPRISE!

The Possibility Club Podcast – March 1, 2024



Opinion: How USAID can scale an evidence-based approach in its granting

Devex – January 24, 2024

Delivering Resilient Enterprises and Market Systems (DREAMS)

Global Compact on Refugees – December 11, 2023



Philanthropy's "Toyota moment": Embracing Results-Based Funding to Increase Aid Effectiveness

Inside Philanthropy – November 29, 2023

Lessons from refugee entrepreneurs; starting a business in a refugee camp

Maddyness – November 27, 2023



Village Enterprise, Rwanda, 2023

The Life You Can Save – November 22, 2023

Letter: Business skills help tackle extreme poverty in Africa

Financial Times – November 20, 2023

USAID's Development Innovation Ventures (DIV) grants \$6.5 million to Village Enterprise to support Rwandans living in poverty to become entrepreneurs

Cision PR Newswire – November 16, 2023

Dianne Calvi, CEO of Village Enterprise, on ending extreme poverty in rural Africa

Do One Better (Podcast) – November 6, 2023



Building climate resilience through village-based banks

Nation – August 14, 2023

West Pokot farmers learning survival tricks in landslide-prone areas

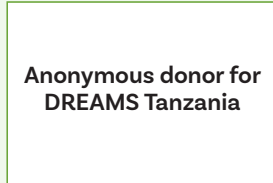
Nation – July 31, 2023

Interested in writing a story about Village Enterprise? We'd love to connect: press@villageenterprise.org

Thank You



We're deeply grateful for the support and collaboration from all of our partners and funders over the years, and we're excited to celebrate our new partnerships this fiscal year.



Development Innovation Ventures



HRA Ethiopia

A special thank you to all of our donors—
our impact is only possible because of your generous support!

**It takes a village to end extreme poverty,
and we're grateful you're a part of ours.**





Do you want to help end extreme poverty in Africa?
Invest in one of our extraordinary entrepreneurs today.

Donate today

Become a monthly donor

GIVE WITH CONFIDENCE

Village Enterprise is currently the only nonprofit in the world with a perfect four-star, 100% rating from Charity Navigator. Give with confidence knowing your donation will have a lasting and transformative impact for the entrepreneurs we serve.



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PHOTOGRAPHY

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