

PORTRAITS OF **PROMISE**



by Ellery Sadler,
staff writer

Each month, we share stories of hope because the world needs to be reminded that hope exists.

Amidst the pain of this past year in particular, we must not forget that lives are being changed, communities are being transformed, and generational chains are being broken. Right now. All over the world.

So come, join us. March alongside us. We need you in this fight.

**These are the stories.
These are the souls.
These are the portraits of the
lives we're changing.**



“They Are Here For Us”

Irene's Hope





IRENE'S STORY: "I'M LIKE THEIR PARENTS"

**No child should have to be the parent to their siblings.
Kids should get to be kids.**

But in Kenya, **an estimated 3.6 million children¹** have been orphaned or are living in vulnerable situations. Too many kids grow up like Irene: The teenager acts as the functional parent for all six of her younger siblings.

"As the firstborn, I do cook for them," Irene explains. "I do wash their clothes. I take care of them. I make sure everyone goes to school. I'm like their parents."

It's a big job for anyone, let alone a 19-year-old girl shouldering this responsibility alone. Irene has a bright smile and an equally bright mind that loves to learn, but most of her days are spent

¹https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261735717_Orphans_and_Vulnerable_Children_in_Kenya_Results_From_a_Nationally_Representative_Population-Based_Survey

managing household tasks and trying to ensure that she and her siblings survive. When she shares about their situation, her voice becomes thick with emotion.

“We don’t live with my parents,” she says, “because my dad passed away and my mom also left us. She left us long before, and she didn’t tell us where she was going.”

When Irene and her siblings do get a chance to go to school, they are often chased away because they cannot afford the school fees. It’s hard not to feel like your future is slipping away each time that happens, when you’re a teenager with no one to turn to. Every day, your younger siblings are looking to you for answers and depending on you for survival.

It is children like Irene and her siblings whom Pastor Samson Kirinya and his wife, Charity, have focused their entire ministry on. Twelve years ago, they felt called by God to Taveta, Kenya, to serve the community there—but weren’t sure what that would look like. They began holding services every Sunday to worship, preach and pray.



Every week, large groups of children would show up. At first, Pastor Samson was disappointed. Where were the adults? Why was their ministry not having more impact on the community?

Eventually, though, Samson and Charity realized that God was telling them something. These precious children were their ministry. As they began engaging with the kids each week, they learned that many of the children were suffering from hunger and did not know where their next meal would come from. Samson and Charity began providing healthy meals each Sunday and, as they did, the number of children attending church began rapidly increasing. Kids would go home to their villages and tell other hungry children about the pastor and his wife who were serving meals. The need was enormous. At this time, Samson and Charity began asking kids to take them to their homes, to introduce them to their parents or caretakers so the couple





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We look forward to making a difference together.**



orphan's**promise**

“You can go to school without food, but you cannot learn.”



could learn more about their living situations. That's when they were struck with the truth.

“When we visited their families,” says Pastor Samson, “we realized that some of the children did not have a father or a mother in their homes. They were just living by themselves.” Like Irene, these kids were being forced at young ages to grapple with taking care of and providing for themselves and their siblings in situations of extreme poverty. Heartbroken, Samson and Charity wanted to step in and do more. The first, most urgent need they knew they had to address was nutrition.

“You can go to school without food, but you cannot learn,” Charity explains. “So you have schooling but not learning.” Nutrition, on the other hand, gives children a chance. It is one of the most important needs of any child, because it allows them not only to physically thrive but also to engage with the world around them in ways that go beyond survival. Food feeds the body and the soul. It means health and it means hope. Once a child is fed, they are able to stay alert and focused and to actually access the education necessary to prepare them for a brighter future.

A REVOLUTION OF HOPE

In the face of such enormous need, Samson and Charity found that fully resourcing the program was difficult.

“Before we started partnering with Orphan’s Promise, we had so many challenges trying to help these kids,” says Pastor Samson. “The willingness to help the children, feed them, and take them to school was there in us. But the ability to do that was very limited for us.”

That is one of the incredible things about the Orphan’s Promise partner model. It allows us to equip and support local heroes on the ground who are being the hands and feet of Jesus across the globe. Empowered by donors like you who are passionate about seeing transformational change in underserved communities, we are able to magnify and maximize the efforts of our local partners.

Pastor Samson puts it this way: “Since we started partnering

with Orphan’s Promise, the cases of malnutrition that were there with the children have been eradicated—because the children have been getting balanced meals. Since we started paying their school fees and providing their learning materials to them through the Orphan’s Promise support, there has not been a single child who has dropped out of school. There is a lot of renewed hope among the children we have, and we thank God because of how far He has taken us.”

“We see a change in them,” Charity agrees. Some of their students have gone on to attend college, and others have found steady, useful employment. But beyond these tangible outcomes, there is a deeper impact that will reverberate through eternity. For some of the kids, it is the first time they have had someone believe in them. It is the first time they have heard someone say, “You can do this.” “I’m here for you.” “I’m proud of you.” For Irene and her brothers and

While the World Bank reports that poverty has declined in Kenya in recent years, approximately one third of the population still lives below the international poverty line.²

²<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kenya/publication/kenya-economic-update-poverty-incidence-in-kenya-declined-significantly-but-unlikely-to-be-eradicated-by-2030>

sisters, getting to pursue their studies was a dream come true. But knowing that there were people who cared about them and were looking out for them was life-changing.

“My pastor here was like a dream for our family,” says Irene. Her eyes sparkle with tears. “They have been our help, because they love us. They are here for us.”

To children who are intimately acquainted with the pain of abandonment and loss, these words are a revolution. To be known, loved, and cared for—instead of left—is a battle cry of hope. And it does not stop with them. The work that people like Pastor Samson and Charity are doing, and that you’re supporting, is going to change the face of a nation. With your help, they are raising up a generation of young Christian leaders who love their people and their country and are equipped to break free from intergenerational cycles of trauma, poverty and illiteracy that have been modeled for them since birth.

These stories we share with you each month—like Irene’s—are an invitation to celebrate. They are a rallying cry of hope in a weary, broken world. But they are also an invitation to march with us. Because the work has just begun. Each celebration represents an opportunity to redouble our efforts—to feed more hungry bellies, educate more bright little minds, and empower more families with the opportunity to stay together.

These children are hope-warriors. They are leaders. They are kingdom-builders. Thank you for believing in them, because we believe they are going to change the world.

Around the globe, malnutrition causes nearly half of all deaths for children 5 years old and under. According to UNICEF, 26% of children under 5 in Kenya are stunted due to malnutrition or other health reasons.³

³<https://www.unicef.org/kenya/nutrition#:~:text=In%20Kenya%2C%2026%20per%20cent,per%20cent%20suffer%20from%20wasting.&text=Kenya%20has%20made%20significant%20progress,an%20increase%20in%20breastfeeding%20rates.>





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