



*Equipping Women
Empowering Change
Overcoming Poverty*

Kenya



Women in the Uthukanyo Women's Group in Kenya receive a life-changing water tank. They raised half the funds and Women's Enterprises International matched their funds.

Women's Enterprises International (WEI) Philosophy:

We work to transform lives and communities by reaching across cultures equipping women living in poverty to achieve their God-given potential. We dream and work *with* the women, not for them. We envision and work towards sustainable change. Our work is done through leaders born, raised and working in Kenya.

Programs:

- Clean Water
- Education
- Income Generation

Issues:

WEI is currently focusing our work in an ever-expanding area outside Nairobi, much of which is accessible by car over extremely rough, rocky roads. Most women live in mud huts and cook over open fires; a few have very primitive concrete block homes. They have no modern conveniences. The area is extremely impoverished and the women are at the mercy of the weather. Water is found in muddy holes and is used not only for drinking but also for bathing and washing clothes. It's all most of them have. They rely on the rains to water their crops of corn, cucumbers and beans. If they get too much or too little rain they will lose their crops with few opportunities to replant. There is very little work for the men whose self-worth suffers as a result; education for girls is not possible for most, access to health care is extremely limited.

In-Country Coordinator:

All WEI programs recruit the assistance of a local woman leader to handle the organization and implementation of programs. We have several in-country coordinators in Kenya: Jane Maitha works with income generation in the area south of the Nairobi-Mombasa highway. Gracie Mullei coordinates the area north and east of Nairobi, developing women's groups and working on accessing clean water and income generation. Sister Bernadette handles our education program, working with high school and university students. She works near Gracie.

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WEI's Accomplishments:

To understand how WEI works in Kenya, it is important to first understand that we partner with women's groups there. Neighbors come together, register with the Kenyan government, elect officers—Chairwoman, Vice Chairwoman, Secretary and Treasurer. Next they decide on what project they will take on—most agree that procuring water tanks is the most important goal. With clean accessible water, they cut hours of time walking to mud holes—hours which can now be used for income generation projects such as raising chickens for the eggs which they will sell at market, or raising goats for milk and meat. In 1999, one woman's group existed; in 2009 there are 15 groups all working on projects. The number of groups is continually growing as women watch the success of their neighbors and ask to form a supported group. Through these groups, WEI has seen a number of successes:

- Water tanks—WEI started matching the purchase of 6,000 liter tanks. When the women saw they could actually accomplish their goals, they upped the size of the tanks—they are now purchasing 10,000 liter tanks. Women save whatever money they can find and then once every 4 to 6 months, they hold a “Harambee” (a Swahili word meaning “let's pull together”) and open their banks, recording the money saved by each woman. The money is pooled together. When a group raises enough money for one tank, WEI matches it so they are able to purchase two tanks. The groups takes a vote on who will receive the tanks, generally the oldest and most infirm are first in line. Then they move on to save for more tanks until each woman in the group has a tank outside her front door. The huge tanks collect rain water and have revolutionized the lives of these women. To date 256 water tanks have been placed in partnership, 116 of them funded by WEI.
- Education—In the past, WEI paid to send girls to primary school—grades 1 through 8. But primary education is now paid for by the Kenyan government; secondary and university are not. WEI helps by providing scholarships to students who show promise, are committed to furthering their education and who may return to their village to improve the quality of life once they have graduated. When parents have a little money for school fees, they almost exclusively send their sons and leave their daughters to do chores at home. This year, through generous sponsorship support, 10 young women and one young man are going to college or university. WEI firmly believes—along with many other experts in this field—that education is probably the most crucial component to help people overcome poverty.
- Income Generation—Once women have met the basic need for clean water, they move on to help their families by starting small businesses. A number of groups are raising chickens—through in-country coordinator Gracie Mullei, their eggs are sold at market. One group is raising cows for milk and to produce natural fertilizer. Another is keeping bees, harvesting the honey periodically and selling it to motorists along the road between Nairobi and Mombasa. WEI provides start-up funds and helps with equipment, always in partnership with the women. More than money, women's hopes are also growing as they see their successes.

Opportunities for Involvement:

- As more women see the success of their neighbors, the excitement grows. We are now committed to sending 75 – 10,000 liter water tanks at a current cost of approximately \$1,147 each—a total of \$86,025. Additional groups are currently preparing proposals for more projects.
- Seven higher ed students need support in the form of scholarships. The current cost per student to attend higher education averages out to \$2,257 per year.
- Four more cows need funding; the cost per cow is currently \$900.
- Two chicken houses are promised—each runs around \$2,200—they are made of bricks to protect the chickens from marauding animals.

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Women's Enterprises is a 501(c)3 organization, eligible for employer sponsored matching programs. Our Federal Tax ID number is 91-2153830.