



Field Report SPRING QUARTER 2004

Village Enterprise Fund

helping the poor through entrepreneurial grants



From under a tree to a real showroom

by Barbara Lamb Hall,
VEF Development Director

In September, Executive Director, Brian Lehnen, and I visited VEF projects in Kenya and Uganda. In western Kenya, we visited **Jaribu Tailoring Group** in the tiny village of Chimoi. Jackson Luvonga and his group run the shop. We featured a photo of Jackson in our Spring 2003 newsletter [SHOWN ABOVE, LEFT].

Jackson and his shop are a real success. More than two years ago, Jaribu Tailoring received a \$100 business grant. At the time, the small group rented one sewing machine. The business was situated under a tree down the road from the local parish church! No kidding! Jackson had considerable skill as a tailor, having worked with the government and as a teacher of the trade for much of his professional career. With hard work and creativity, the business did well. [CONT'D, PAGE 3...]

Tailor Jackson Luvonga and group in front of his store



Tailor shop update:

- **Supplies uniforms for seven schools**
- **Graduated 8 students; has 7 new students**
- **Business profits to fund building of training room**

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From the Director:

by *Brian Lehnen*

People often ask me why they should support VEF and what is unique about what we do? I think those are great questions and I always enjoy answering them.

As the old saying goes, what are the three most important things in business?—people, people, and people. We have some of the most dedicated board and staff of any organization I know. First, our **Board of Directors**. I am in awe of the dedication and service that our board has for this organization. They work very hard with no compensation other than knowing they are helping change lives. As wonderful as that is, it means they work hard at some very mundane and difficult jobs. Also many of them have gone to the field at their own expense to see first hand the work we are doing.

Second, our **staff**. We have a dedicated and committed staff both here and in Africa. We have had no turnover in our Africa staff since they were first hired over four years ago. And I always admire their love for the poor that they show on a daily basis.

Third, our **Programs**. VEF has grown a lot since we gave our first \$100 grant to start a business. Now we have three levels of grants and a loan program for larger scale projects—all carefully crafted so that we can leverage our funds to benefit as many people as possible.

Fourth, **Evaluation**. We are always looking to be sure that our programs are really helping the poor. We have sent independent interns to the field, like Jessica and Matt Flannery [LEFT], to confirm that we are reaching the poor effectively.



Finally, it always amazes and humbles me to see the generosity of our **Supporters**, many of whom have been faithful for over ten years! That always inspires me to try my best to be a good steward of your support.

I hope you see why I like the question—Why should I support VEF?!!

Our Mission

at Village Enterprise Fund (VEF) is to empower people in developing countries to overcome extreme poverty and despair by helping them to create small businesses, thus giving them the dignity of long-lasting jobs and self-reliance. Once empowered, parents are able to pass these skills on to their children, thus breaking the cycle of poverty for future generations.



Current Focus:

- Kenya
- Uganda
- Tanzania

■ Upcoming Trip to Field

In May, VEF Executive Director, **Brian Lehnen** and VEF Board of Directors member **Peter Carpenter**, will travel to Africa to visit businesses. Each will visit VEF projects in Kenya and Tanzania, participate at the CEED conference and meetings with Project Baobab, which teaches Kenyan high school students business skills, founder **GeeGee Williams** and manager **Jane Kuniya**.

■ Interns Depart for Field

Jessica Jackley Flannery departs for Kenya in March, to undertake a three-month internship with VEF in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. She will conduct targeted evaluations and case studies of VEF projects. VEF Africa staff is excited to host Jessica. Jessica's husband, **Matt Flannery**, will visit during this time, taking digital video of VEF projects and rural African life.

VEF Africa staff will also host **Scott Stuppi**, a photojournalist, to capture VEF businesses and life in the villages.

■ Uganda Implements Veterinary Services Shop

With funding from the **West Foundation**, VEF started its Veterinary Services Shop in Soroti, northeastern Uganda, home of our VEF country office. This project will provide vital veterinary pharmaceuticals for sale to area farmers. We so appreciate the West

Foundation for backing this Microenterprise Integration Project (MIP). It is the third such project funded by the West Foundation, which also funded the Tanzania tractor and the Kenya maize mill and commercial bakery.

■ CEED Conference Slated

The 2nd Annual Center for Excellence in Entrepreneurship Development (CEED) Conference in Nairobi, Kenya takes place on May 12-14, 2004. VEF is a sponsor of this event. At the conference, VEF will recognize two outstanding entrepreneurs who have excelled in our grant program.

[CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE]

In fact, Jackson's business did so well that last spring, our VEF staff nominated his group for an Empowerment Grant. As you may know, we just started this program last year. Our most promising entrepreneurs, who have used a \$100 grant successfully for at least two years, with a business plan for growth or expansion, can apply

for this secondary funding of \$300. Each empowerment grantee must also contribute at least 10% cost share (although many contribute 20% or more). By July 14, 2003, Jackson and Jaribu Tailoring, one of just five groups selected at the time in Kenya, received their empowerment grant.

By September, the group had rented a large showroom, purchased three sewing machines, and brought on four apprentices. Jaribu has contracts with five local schools to prepare uniforms and the business keeps getting more successful.

VEF has now funded 50 empowerment grants. Recipients and their families now eat a better diet, send more kids to school and now get medical care. These larger businesses also hire employees, open branch locations, have regular customers, and have store stock worth \$350 or more! We were awestruck by the rapid success and amazed at the ripple effect of these businesses. Stay tuned for more updates!





Village Enterprise Fund

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

“Thanks very much for your extended hand to our poor people.”

—Daria Kombe, *Volunteer Field Coordinator (VFC), Tanzania*



Field Report

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Field Report is a publication of VEF, which is a tax-exempt, public benefit corporation.

Spring Quarter 2004 issue

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VEF gift opportunities

- **DataLink: Tracking Business Growth and Challenges**
The DataLink Project will link the business information between our field offices and our U.S. office. This project will allow two-way communication with our donors and Africa, with letters, stories of business successes and digital photos of VEF businesses and rural life.
- **Digital Cameras to Capture our Business Successes**
New or good quality used digital cameras, so that our Africa staff can take photos of our businesses, projects and business training sessions.
- **Appreciated Stock**
Please consider donating appreciated stock—a classic win-win for VEF and you! You receive a tax deduction and VEF receives a gift to fund more successful projects. If you'd like to make a stock donation, please contact our broker, Tom Simmons at Morgan Stanley Dean Witter at (800) 755-8081 or (650) 853-4004. VEF's account number is #112-126508-004 DTC #015.

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