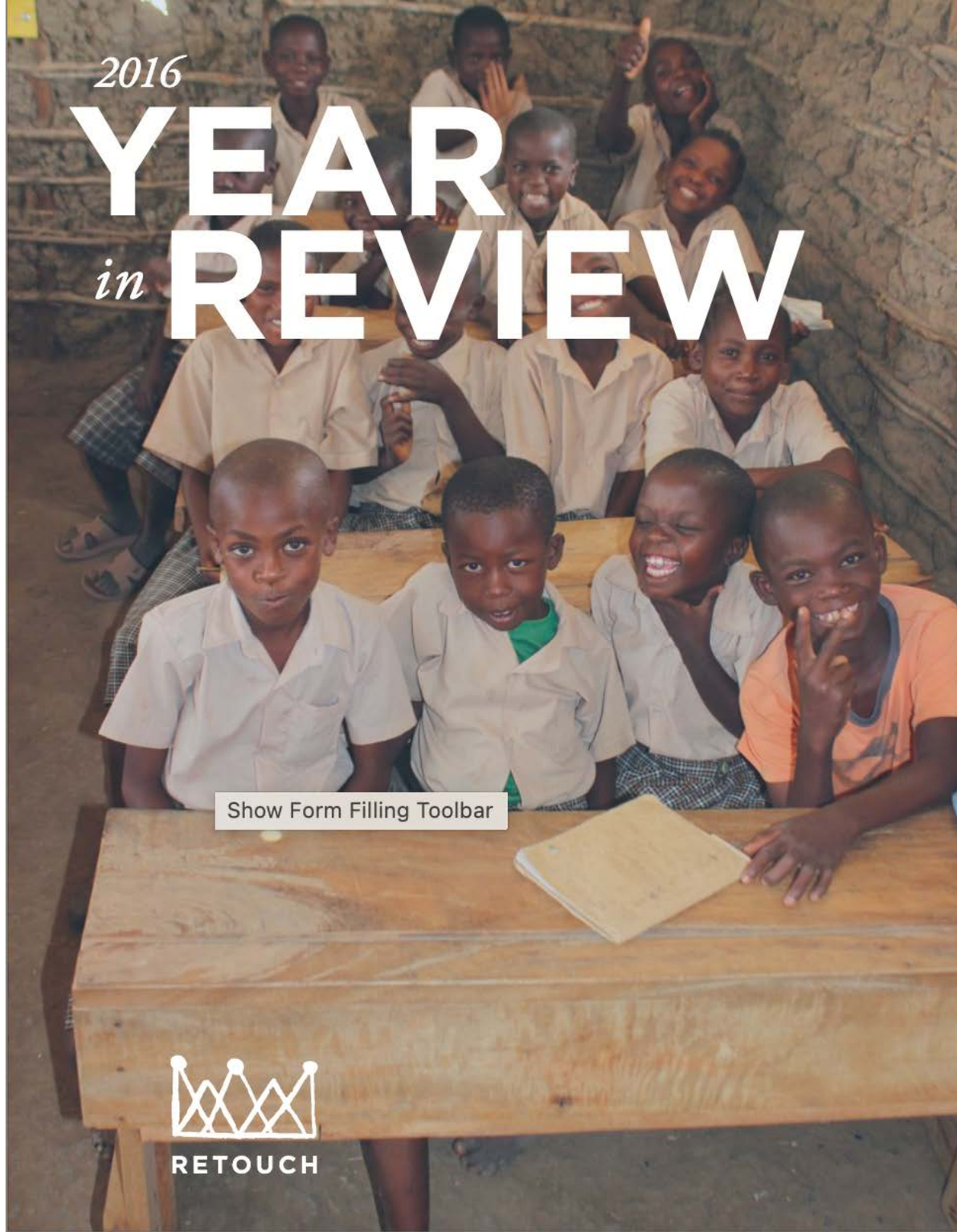

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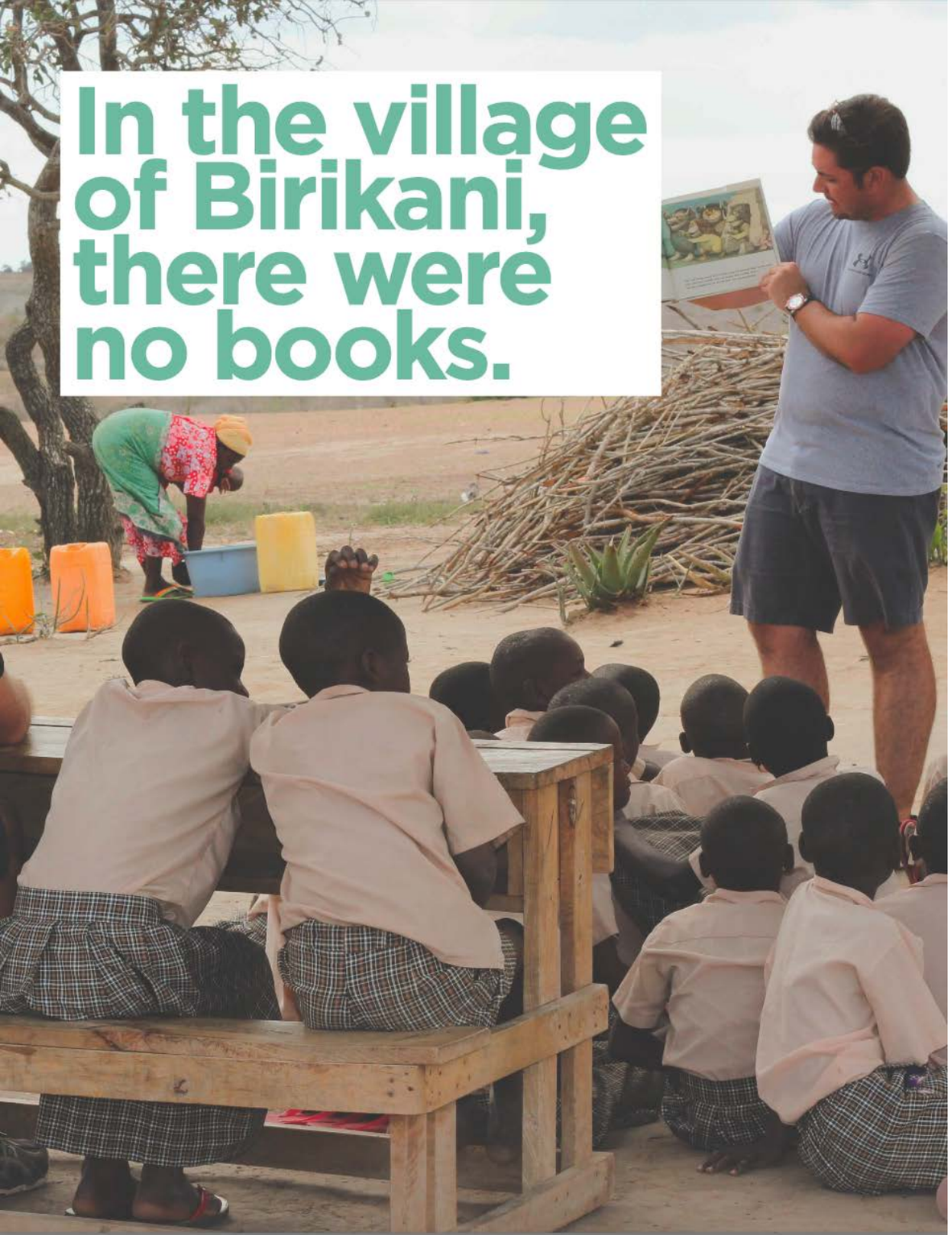
IT TOOK A VILLAGE

THE STORY *of* A LIBRARY *in* THE BUSH

Your name is
Mwaziki Jongo,
and this story is real.



Imagine for a moment, *that you are an African child. Imagine that you live in a small village nestled among the rolling hills of Kenya, with little houses and thatch roofs, picture the goats and chickens running about, and one small school that was created just for you. Now imagine that you've never seen a book.* (*continued on next page*)



In the village of Birikani, there were no books.

Well, truthfully there was one, but it was so tattered that it was more of a collection of loose leaf sheets than a real live book. When we first arrived in Birikani there was nothing more than a one room school-house, where the kids made desks out of rocks, and only came to pretend that their school was real. In the first year we built classrooms and hired teachers, had uniforms made, and even built a kitchen. But still, there were no books. We bought textbooks for the teachers, but nothing that told a story... nothing that inspired. We talked about having books, and everytime the kids would bring us their 'book' we dreamed, what would it be like to have real books? Would they read? Would they escape to far away places and have dreams of castles and princesses?

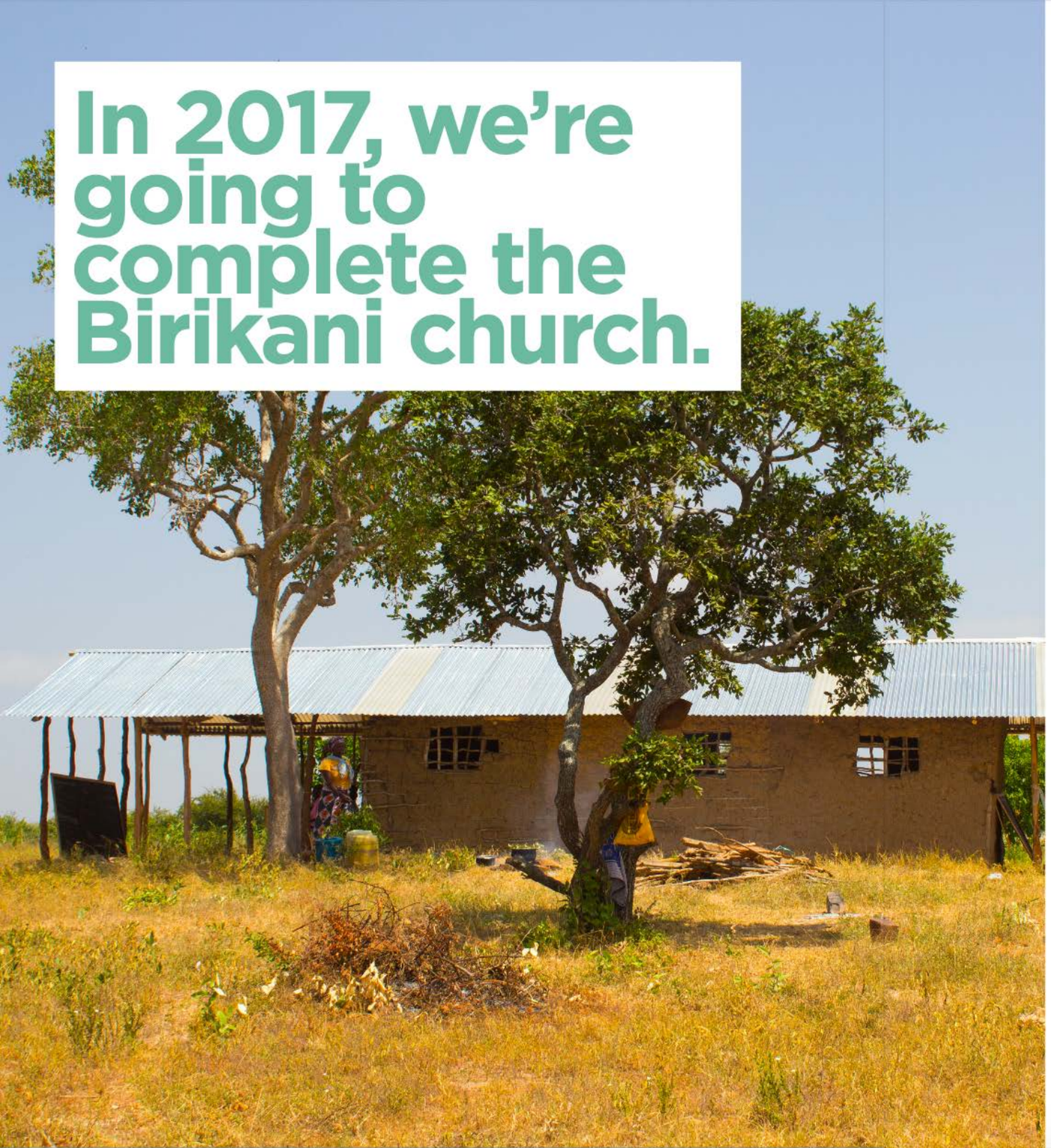
In that first year, even without mentioning our little dream, the books began to come. People would mail boxes of books to us in the states, old library copies, book fair purchases, and precious books from home. We would diligently fill our suitcases, weighing them carefully to ensure we maximized our 50lb allowance. It felt like so many books. We took them to our Mtwapa school because we had an extra room that could serve as a libary, and withIn a few months time, the kids had not only read every book but they had memorized every word. I had girls reciting Cinderella, and boys sharing their insights from "Little Bill." The hunger for reading was infectious and that got us dreaming about a library in Birikani.

When I told you earlier that Birikani had no books, I wasn't lying. Birikani had no books. The village has nothing that the earth doesn't provide, the houses are made of mud and the roofs of thatch, their food is corn and the occasional fish. It's simple at best, extreme poverty in truth. At the end of the day, what good would story books do? We all know that books inspire, teach, and challenge. Books incite ideas, political change, and social practices, but its the writers who have the power. We wanted logical thinkers, creative minds, and good writers. Children who would grow into adults who have the power to communicate, to advocate, and to transform. Books were the gateway to inspiration.

It was Sarah Roberts who ultimately decided we needed a real library. She spent countless hours researching shipping costs and seeking book donations, she tithed by buying books, fully convinced that God had a plan for a library in Birikani. And boy was she right. She found a company that donated shipping costs and helped us fill a container with over 19,000 books. Her kids at school donated soccer balls and shin guards, everyone around her pitched in, all to make a dream happen for kids they had never met. In Birikani they began preparing as well. They rebuilt a bridge on the main road that would support the weight of a shipping container, villagers piled rocks and poured concrete so that truck could access our plot of land, and they poured pillars for the truck to rest on. Our pastors made contacts for truckers that would make the trek to Birikani, shipping agents, custom officers, it was all coming together.

All together it took six months from dreams to reality, six months of emails and hard labor, six months of planning, praying, and preparing, and it all culminated in worship under the African sky. Sarah was there when the container landed in Birikani. She was there when the dust settled and the whole village danced and sang together. She was there when they laid hands on it and thanked God for the miracle of a library.

I've been to Birikani dozens of times, I've seen poverty all around the world, but it never gets easier to see a world in which people don't have the basic necessities that I grew up with in America. I can't imagine as a child calling a library a miracle, libraries are mundane creatures, where old ladies tell you to be quiet, and reference books are avoided. And yet in Birikani, a library is a miracle, a place of dancing and shouting, a place where kids giggle, oohing and aahing over pop-up books and dictionaries. It's a place where kids are learning that they have the power, the power to change, to advocate, and to participate. Our village learned that lesson, as did kids in Brentwood, my family in Virginia, and countless others. It took a village to make a miracle **and it took you.**



In 2017, we're going to complete the Birikani church.

Churches are beautiful things — they are a sacred space for the body of Christ to come together and worship their beloved King. Jennifer and I have had the pleasure of traveling across the globe, we've been to gothic cathedrals, American mega-churches, and to our personal favorites; little mud buildings with bamboo windows and grass roofs. We've had the pleasure of worshipping with congregations that are quiet and reserved, and among charismatics that jump, shout, and dance. We love the body of Christ; we love to see people worship together. Over a year ago now, we began construction on the Birikani church. It was, and is, the first church within a 3-4 hour walk. For many people, the simple establishment of a church was enough to follow Jesus, others who had been believers for a long time were relieved and so thankful to have a place of worship close to home.

We originally set out the parameters of the church to be something like 25' by 50' it was supposed to be simple and a little on the small side as our budget didn't allow for anything bigger. On the day we measured out the church, Jennifer heard God say "as big as you build it, I will fill it" and in her true prophetic style, Jenn told the builders to expand the foundation. The building went from a small sanctuary to an enormous room, with classrooms on the back, and even an upstairs with 4 more rooms for school. So brick by brick, we began to build with the money that was available. We bought river stone and poured concrete for a foundation that would last, we put in rebar and started the walls. People of other faiths would walk by, shake their heads and say "now we've really lost." The building became more than a structure, it became a testimony.

Today the building stands half built, its walls are ¾ of the way up, there are holes where there should be windows and the classrooms haven't been started beyond the exterior walls. It's not been easy to watch construction halt as we wait on finances to come in, but we're confident that God spoke to us. Sometimes miracles take time. A few months ago someone called and donated $15,000 toward the Birikani Church, and asked that we make it a matching campaign. If you ever have the chance to visit Birikani, you'll know what it's like to see a place that God is in love with. I don't really know why, but it's atmospheric. When we first went to Birikani there was nothing there, barely any people... nothing, and then something happened. The Kenyan government started building a high-speed railway that practically runs through our backyard, and has a stop just miles away. The electrical company ran power lines, and people started appearing. It's not a town yet, it's still a small out of the way village and all I really know to say, is that a miracle is on the way. A people once forgotten have now been brought near.

In 2017 we're going to complete the Birikani church. We're going to worship there together and it's going to be a place of miraculous encounter. Today, as you read this, we need your help in finishing the project. **With a gift-match of up to $15,000, there has never been a better time to give.** Please visit our website, www.retouch.is, and consider giving to the miracle of Birikani.



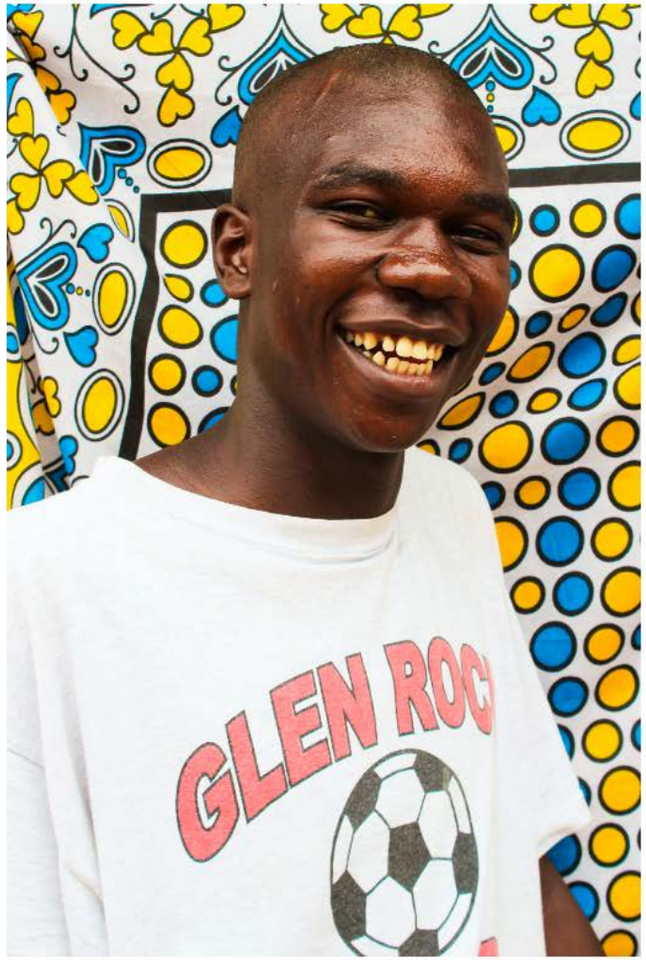
SAUMU & JOYCE: *a tale of Cinderlla*

I'd like to introduce you to two of the cutest kids I know, who also happen to be best friends: Saumu and Joyce. If you take a walk across the schoolyard, chances are you'll find them together holding hands, jumping rope, or whispering secrets to each other. It's the sort of friendship that makes you want to call your elementary school besties and have a reunion down by the jungle gym. Both of the girls just happen to be sponsored by the same family, Dusty and Summer Strickland who coordinate teacher trainings and have had the chance to visit the girls in person.

A few months after we opened the first library at Mtwapa, we returned for a brief visit and wanted to find out which books the kids liked most. We went upstairs and found Saumu and Joyce sitting together with every princess book we owned, pointing at pictures and chatting away. I asked them if they could tell me the story of Cinderella, and to my surprise they had memorized it word-for-word. They liked the part with the fairy godmother and the pumpkin chariot the best, but they also liked that Cinderella was able to go from a simple life to being the princess. I couldn't help but be impressed by their passion for reading and in particular their obsession with princess stories. That got me thinking about what these stories mean for girls like Saumu and Joyce, both of whom live in simple houses and really never dreamed of a better future until their sponsors came along. I imagine that in some way, Dusty and Summer are like the fairy godmother, they invest and love, creating the possibility of a better future, something different, something grand. Education is like a ticket to the ball: it doesn't guarantee you'll meet Prince Charming but it does mean you have the opportunity. That in a nutshell is what sponsoring a child is all about, **you're providing a means to a better future.** Whether it's for Saumu and Joyce or any of our kids, inside of each of them is a prince and a princess, a child of God just waiting to be revealed.

FROM THE SLUM TO SUCCESS:

how one Retouch graduate is now traveling the world



One of our first high school graduates was a young man named Collins Embeyu, he was the son of one of our primary school security guards. When we first accepted Collins into sponsorship he was already in his sophomore year of high school, his mother was simply unable to afford the rising costs of school. Always faithful at church, Collins is almost embarrassingly shy, always covering his face when talking to us to hide his nervous laughter, he holds a special place in our hearts. Last year Collins graduated from school and asked us if we would help him get his drivers license as a skill for getting a job. We made a 'work-study' plan for him and he was able to complete the course and get his license. A few months ago, we met with Collins and discovered that he has become the personal driver for a German attorney who has business in Kenya! The job provides benefits, great pay, and Collins is traveling to Germany to continue driving for the attorney. **This is one of many testimonies of children and teenagers whose lives have been transformed through education and practical skills.** We are so proud of Collins and wish him the best in his new endeavors!

INTRODUCING: *Patrick Julo*



As a ministry we always dreamed that God would enable us to raise up national leaders to take over Retouch in Kenya. It turns out, God had already raised them up and Patrick Julo is one of those people. Pastor Patrick serves as the director of our Birikani School and as the Pastor of the local church. He oversees all of the day-to-day operations of the school including attendance, employee management, food programs, soccer and community development, and the building of the new church building. He is an incredibly humble man, full of grace and kindness. He's a perfect fit for working with our kids in Birikani. Patrick is happily married to Margaret and together they have 5 beautiful children.

WHERE *in the world is* BIRIKANI?



Some of you have been asking where the village of Birikani is located, you know it's in Africa but that's about it. The short version is that Birikani is about a 2 hour drive from Mombasa, Kenya in the bush of Kwale County. It's a small village made up of about 500 people (including kids), several thousand goats, a few green mambas, and a lot of cactus. Our school there boasts 150 kids, 5 teachers, 2 cooks, 2 guards, and the occasional wandering herd of livestock.



FROM NASHVILLE TO AFRICA: *how soccer balls change lives*

Throughout the world, there is one sport played by almost every child; Soccer, futbol, or football. Regardless of what you call it or where you are from, the game, its rules, and influence remain the same. Here in Africa the kids argue over their favorite teams and try to watch the matches by peering through the door at neighboring bars, local teams are formed and matches played. When we first went to Birikani, we found a group of youth that proudly proclaimed themselves our local football team. Over the past few years we've paid them for working odd jobs with footballs. At first, we didn't think much of it, but over time we've seen the importance of this sport for both our community identity and our ability to share the Gospel message.

As it turns out, a group in the Nashville area also love to play football. They love it so much that they wanted to share their gear with our kids and local team in Birikani. Over the past year they've donated uniform sets, practice jerseys, soccer cleats, balls, shin guards, socks, and pretty much anything you can imagine a proper team would need. We've been able to not only outfit our local youth team, but have also established a league with the Birikani school kids. In a community where the kids were used to playing with a ball made of rags and rope, it's not unusual to see them kicking around a brightly colored Adidas ball or trying out a One World ball. It's almost like being transported to another place as we watch our kids play, the sounds of laughter, the thump of a ball being kicked, if you close your eyes you can imagine them playing anywhere in the world. We're learning that sometimes love looks like food and schoolbooks, but other days it looks like soccer balls and playtime. At Retouch, we believe **every kid deserves the right to play hard and study hard.** Here's to the playing.

TUNE'S MOM: *when love comes to town*

As you know, Retouch is a Christian organization and we make no apologies for that. Without Jesus, we are nothing and gain nothing. However, we gladly and joyfully accept children of all faiths into our child sponsorship program, two of those children are Tune and Mariam. The girls are gorgeous, with big brown eyes and long eyelashes, they are both tall, mischievous and intelligent, needless to say they are among our favorite students. When we first brought them into the program we only met their mother briefly as she was HIV positive and found work as a prostitute. We rarely got to have 'parent-teacher' conferences with her and more often than not the girls would come to school dirty or missing their book bags. About a year and a half ago, their mom had an encounter with Jesus and gave her heart to the Lord. As a result she was thrown out by her landlord (of another faith) and had no place to go, that is, until another mother from the church agreed to take her in.

During this time of transition, Tune and Mariam went to live with one of our teachers from the school, a single lady named Janet. Janet would care for the girls acting as a surrogate mother, teaching discipline, making them wash their clothes, and ensuring they made it to school on time. Their mom would take them on the weekends as she was able and the girls would return to Ms. Janet's house on Mondays after school. This is the testimony of child sponsorship, children (and a mother) who would have slipped through the cracks, instead get a new chance at life. They get to meet Jesus, have a stable place to live, and get discipled by the local body.

Sponsorship is about more than just education; it's about a right to life. It's an open door for evangelism through acts of love. Sponsorship is about Jesus.

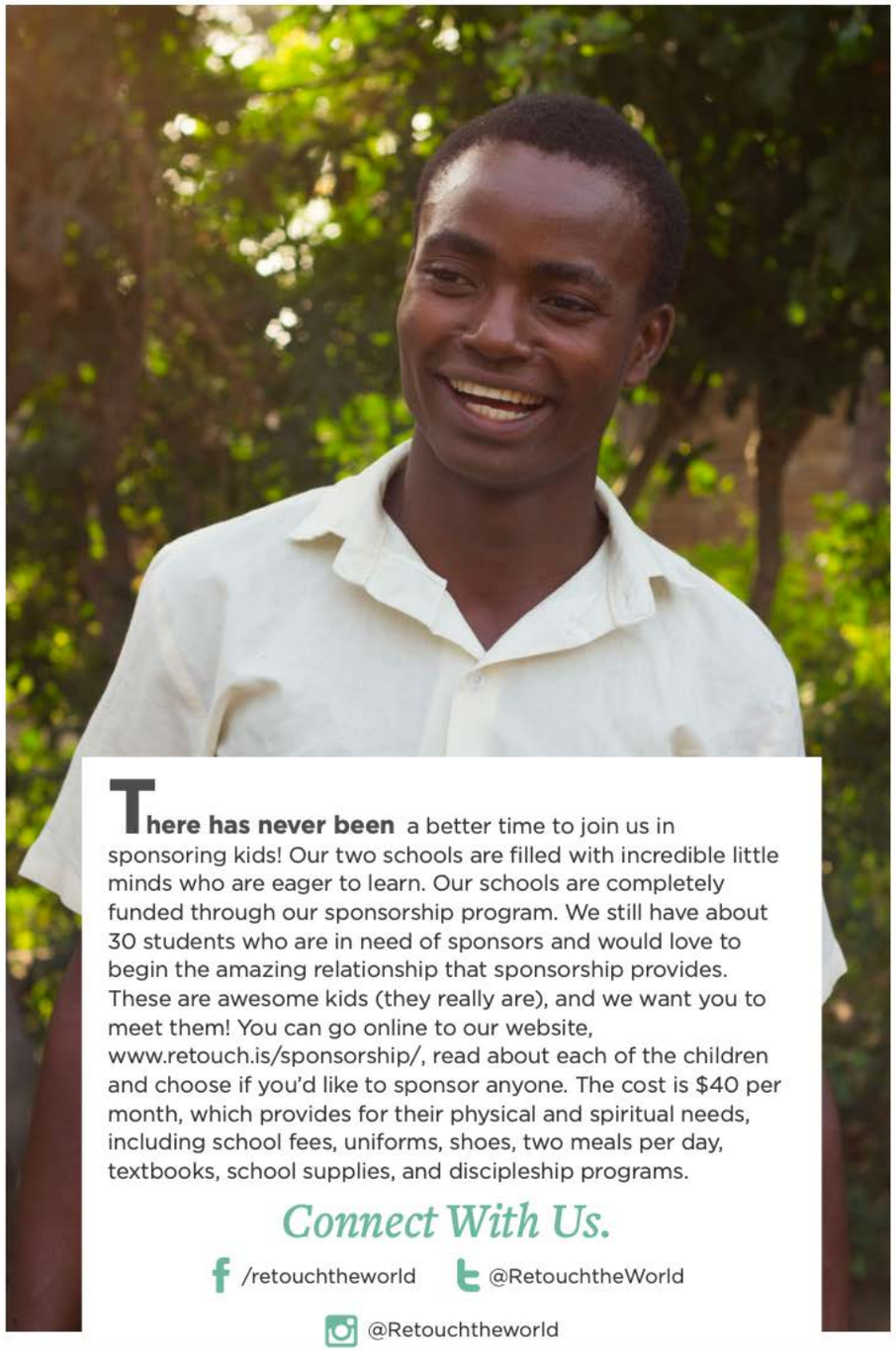




A WORD *of* GRATITUDE

With great, exceeding joy, we want to thank you for supporting Retouch this year. Thank you for investing in the lives of children and in our ministry to Africa. This year has been so special as our schools have grown in number, and our kids have grown in knowing and loving Jesus. In talking about Jesus, Luke 2:52 says "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man." We share the same testimony about our children in Kenya, as they grow up in our schools, they are growing into young men and women who truly love God. We are so honored to serve the Lord as missionaries, and to share the love of Jesus among some of the world's most vulnerable people. Please continue to pray for us, for our kids and their families. We also need your financial support and ask that you will prayerfully consider sponsoring a child in 2017. It's an incredible opportunity to love a child tangibly and see them grow up in the Lord.

Lower Still,
Chris and Jennifer Hadsell



There has never been a better time to join us in sponsoring kids! Our two schools are filled with incredible little minds who are eager to learn. Our schools are completely funded through our sponsorship program. We still have about 30 students who are in need of sponsors and would love to begin the amazing relationship that sponsorship provides. These are awesome kids (they really are), and we want you to meet them! You can go online to our website, www.retouch.is/sponsorship/, read about each of the children and choose if you'd like to sponsor anyone. The cost is $40 per month, which provides for their physical and spiritual needs, including school fees, uniforms, shoes, two meals per day, textbooks, school supplies, and discipleship programs.

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