

Buckner and Baylor shaped Kenyan's ministry to the poor

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When asked about her work with orphans and children in poverty, the normally upbeat Rose Wasike paused as tears fill her eyes.

“My parents were very poor,” she said. “I was the third child out of 11, and growing up I saw the problem and the power of poverty. My parents used to struggle a lot to (put) food on the table.”

Wasike's parents were determined to help her go to school, even though some of her siblings had to drop out to earn money for the family.

“My parents were struggling in order to pay my school fees,” she explained. “My father was a peasant farmer, and sometimes after selling all the products, all the money that was saved out of that product was all given to me.”

Motivated to excel

The sacrifice her parents made motivated her to excel. It also revealed poverty as a power that needed to be conquered.

She completed college with a degree in education. After graduation, she taught high school in Kenya, desiring to provide for herself and her parents.

“During my time as a teacher, one thing I realized is that again, I was in the same cycle of admitting students who were also struggling with poverty,” she said. “They had to pay school fees, but some of them—a large majority of them—did not have the ability to do that.”

Served with Buckner

When Buckner International started looking for a volunteer to begin a program in Busia, one of the rural centers of Kenya near the Ugandan border, Wasike enlisted.

She started as a mentor but later became a social worker, recruiting children into the program and giving them an opportunity to attend school.

Wasike loved her work with Buckner and found it a natural fit for her skills and passion. Because of her success starting the Buckner programs in Busia, she moved to Kitale, a slightly larger area in Kenya, to continue her work with Buckner and established a foster care/kinship care program.

Trained at Baylor

In 2012, the opportunity became available for Wasike to attend Baylor University to study social work and earn a master's degree. Because of her dedication to children and families in poverty and her long tenure with Buckner, Wasike seemed like a perfect candidate.

"We knew Rose had the commitment to complete the program," said Dickson Masidano, director of Buckner in Kenya. "One of the warnings is that Baylor is very rigorous; you need to be very hard-working. We knew Rose is hard-working when she commits to something. She gives it all."

Wasike saw her acceptance into the master's program at Baylor as God's handiwork.

"I was very excited when I found out I was accepted," she said. "I went down on my knees and told God: 'Thank you that you've remembered me. The reason why you've chosen me, I don't know, but one thing I know is you are sending me there because there's a mission ahead of me you want me to do.'"

Wasike completed the Baylor University Global Mission Leadership program in May 2015. She spent a week in the Rio Grande Valley to shadow Buckner staff and see practical ways to implement what she learned at Baylor.

Back in Kenya

She's now back in Kenya, implementing case management for families and assisting them to become self-sufficient.

"The biggest challenge I'm seeing in the families I work with is the problem of poverty," Wasike said. "And that has been my greatest burden."