



## News Highlights

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Give Back



Mary, an Impact Hope graduate, gives back by serving as an interpreter for patients at a vision clinic alongside visiting U.S. doctors in Rwanda.

## This Is More Than I Prayed For!

By Joan Oksenholt

"One of my earliest memories is of crying for food in our little house in the camp while my mother slept nearby. It was a long time before I understood why she didn't bring me food," Mary tells me softly.

"My parents had a good farm in the Democratic Republic of Congo until the rebels came. My dad ran in one direction; my mom ran in another and the rebels chased her. She had to hide in a river with her tiny baby boy wrapped around her chest. When she stood up, her newborn was dead. Because of this, my mom was sick and deeply depressed."

Her mom's illness frequently left her unable to provide

food for her children, even when they cried from hunger. "Sometimes our kind neighbor gave us food. It tasted wonderful and I could eat until I was full!"

Life was better when her dad came to visit his family in the camp. He worked as a cow herder many miles away and couldn't visit often, but he always brought food for his family when he came. It's the Congolese custom for the father to give a name to each of his children. Mary was named Mutoni - which means lovely girl. "He was a wonderful father," Mary says, "and I loved knowing that I was his lovely girl. I cherished each moment of the times he was with the (Cont'd inside)



**“Impact Hope sponsors change the dreams of students into reality. They transform lives, including mine, and I am so very grateful.”**

## Mary’s Story Continued

family. “He took his children to church, read Bible stories to them, and fostered Mary’s desire to learn. Her dad died of an unknown illness when she was ten.

Camp life for the little girl was hard. Mary needed the comfort and guidance of her mom, who was too ill to give it to her. “Nevertheless,” Mary says, **“the desire to learn was somehow written inside me when I was very young.** Once my oldest brother brought a book for me to look at. It was the first book I’d ever seen, and I was fascinated by the pictures. I couldn’t wait to go to school and learn how to read.”

It wasn’t long before she watched her friends laughing and happy as they walked to school for first grade. Although she was the right age, there was no one to register her, but Mary had learned to be independent and decided she would go to class anyway.

She washed her own clothes and dried them on a bush. The next morning, she washed her face, put on her clean clothes, and went to school. **“I was thirsty for learning,” she says. “I wanted to learn to read and have access to books. The teacher was kind and let me be part of the class even though I wasn’t registered. Learning felt very natural to me.”**

The next year Mary became the second-grade teacher’s assistant, helping students with their math assignments.

Life was easier when Mary was in third grade because her big sister moved to the camp

and Mary lived with her. “She encouraged me, prepared good food, and I no longer had to wash my clothes by myself. She was like my second mother. I was so happy and relieved!”

**The refugee camp is several miles from a town with a senior high school and bus transportation was very expensive. It was impossible for Mary to be a student there.** She continued to pray about school and studied hard, hoping to get high scores on the national exams given at the end of ninth grade.

**“My scores were high and someone who worked with Impact Hope sponsored me!** I was sent to one of the best boarding schools in the country. I was filled with joy and gratitude that I could continue my education in such a good school.”

Mary is now a sophomore at the Adventist University of Central Africa. She loves her classes, especially those in software engineering, her major field.

Philippians 4:19 is one of her favorite verses. **“God has supplied all my needs and has given me even more than I prayed for!** Impact Hope sponsors change the dreams of students into reality. They transform lives, including mine, and I am so very grateful.”



**Mary is a sophomore at the Adventist University of Central Africa.**

## How Students Are Finding HOPE Through Skills

The Center for Hope is our six-month vocational training program that teaches students hands-on skills they can use right away. For the first three months, students live and learn on campus. Then, for the next three months, they put their skills to work at internships.

There are six tailoring internship sites—one outside each refugee camp—so students can gain real-life experience near their homes. The best interns even get a chance to work at the Kigali Tailoring Center, where they are paid for their skills. Others are ready to start small businesses from home.



**“I didn’t think I could do anything after high school, now, I’m making clothes and helping customers choose designs. I feel proud of myself.” Ester, Tailoring Intern**

For students who choose baking, they spend their three month internship baking in at the newly launched Center for Hope bakery. They make mandazi (a fried doughnut), sliced bread, and rolls. But they don’t stop there—they deliver the bread too!

Using small tuk tuks and motorcycles, the freshly baked HOPE Bread is delivered to community



**“We make bread in the morning, and then ride in the tuk tuk to sell it. People are happy when they see us coming.” Aime, Bakery Intern**

markets, local shops, and restaurants. Some bread is even bought by the Center for Hope to feed the students back on campus. Thanks to a few kind donors, a second tuk tuk will soon start delivering in a new direction to reach even more customers!

These programs don’t just teach skills—they build confidence, pride, and real hope. Thanks to generous donors like you, Impact Hope can continue growing this program and creating opportunities for young people who need it most.

Every loaf of bread, every handmade dress, every sprouting plant—it all begins with someone believing these young refugees are worth investing in.

And you do. Thank you.





# A Kansas City Church of Refugee Youth Gives Back

**N**ew Change for Youth (NC4Y) isn't your typical church. It began in 2017 when six refugee teens in Kansas City gathered with a mentor and decided they wanted to build something different—**something that offered hope, community, and a safe alternative to the drugs and violence claiming their friends' lives.** They gave their group a name: New Change for Youth.

Fast forward to today, and NC4Y has grown into a vibrant church of over 75 children and teens—**most of whom were born in refugee camps and arrived in the U.S. within the last 4-7 years.** Nearly all come from Congolese or Bhutanese backgrounds, and few of their parents attend church. But each Sabbath, the kids come ready to worship, learn, and grow.

In August 2023, a small group attended the ASI convention in Kansas City. While wandering the exhibit hall on Sabbath, one of their leaders found the Impact Hope booth. "This is it," she thought. "This is something our kids can connect with." And they did. **Supporting refugee students in Rwanda—young people with experiences so similar to their own—felt deeply personal.**

In January 2024, **NC4Y began collecting offerings to sponsor four students through**



**These kids from New Change for Youth represent a church fueled by young hearts and faithful giving.**

**Impact Hope—\$200 a month.** They built a dry-erase thermometer with a movable ribbon to track progress each week, and taught the kids about biblical generosity. "We didn't want them to feel pressure," one leader said. "We wanted them to experience the joy of giving." And they have. Some bring crumpled dollar bills. Others share coins in sandwich baggies. Every month, they meet their goal. **And now, they're dreaming of sponsoring even more students through Impact Hope.**

"We give because He gave," their leader shared. "These kids are learning that no matter your age or your past, you can be generous—and it feels good to give."

***To Our Amazing NC4Y Kids – Thank you for supporting refugee youth in Rwanda. Your support shows that no one is too young to make a difference!***

## Ways **YOU** Can Make an Impact

### SPONSOR A STUDENT

\$50 monthly provides a safe education at a Christian boarding school and all living essentials.

### DONATE

Whether you make a monthly donation or a one time donation, 100% of gifts goes directly to the mission.

### FOLLOW

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P.O. Box 28 GLADSTONE, OR 97027

503.673.3905 | [INFO@IMPACT-HOPE.ORG](mailto:INFO@IMPACT-HOPE.ORG) | [IMPACTHOPE.COM](https://www.IMPACTHOPE.COM)

