

## FORWARD TOGETHER: HOPE-FILLED STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL CHURCH

### A PODCAST SERIES BY WORLD RELIEF: EPISODE 3

---

*Hello, my name is Matthew Soerens. I am the U.S. director of Church Mobilization and Advocacy for World Relief.*

*Today's interview is with Micah Kachoi, who serves as the Church Empowerment Zone Coordinator in Turkana Kenya. We conducted this interview a few weeks ago, and Micah shared so much rich spiritual, technical, and cultural knowledge, that it was challenging to condense it down into a 15-minute podcast episode.*

*So, before we move ahead, I wanted to summarize a few of the things he shared so that you as the listeners can get the most out of what Micah said.*

*Turkana, Kenya, where Micah has lived most of his life -- and where he was speaking from during our interview -- is in the far northwest of Kenya, bordering Ethiopia, Uganda, and Sudan. 60% of Turkanas are pastoralists and 20% are agro-pastoralists, meaning they herd livestock to feed their family and earn a living.*

*Turkana has experienced repeated drought, food insecurity, and frequent raids from neighboring communities as people in the broader region struggle to secure basic resources and find land and water for their livestock to graze.*

*Micah is a husband and father of three. He's got a degree in community development and community health, and has worked in those fields for many years in the areas of HIV awareness and prevention, health and nutrition, and education. Today, as I mentioned, he works as World Relief's Church Empowerment Zone Coordinator in Turkana.*

*A Church Empowerment Zone (or CEZ) is a unique model of development, pioneered by World Relief more than 10 years ago that unites churches in a given area so that together, they can have a greater impact in serving the most vulnerable in their community.*

*It's really a privilege to have an on-the-field expert sharing examples and stories of what church empowerment looks like in Turkana. I loved hearing Micah share about churches coming together and mobilizing resources within themselves to meet the physical and spiritual needs of their community. I'm excited for you to hear from him too, so let's jump in.*

---

**Matthew:** Hi Everyone. It's great to be back with you again. I'm very excited to today to be having a conversation with Micah Kachoi. Welcome Micah.

**Micah:** Thank you very much. I'm so glad to be here.

**Matthew:** Can you start by telling us a little bit about where you're from?

**Micah:** I am from Busia County in the western part of Kenya. I've been in Turkana for almost the entire of my life. Micah Kachoi is married to one wife called Bright Jacquet, and we are blessed with three children.

**Matthew:** For those who are listening who may have never heard of what a church empowerment zone is, how would you describe it in one or two sentences, what is the church empowerment zone?

**Micah:** A church empowerment zone, in a few words, it's a geographical location that World Relief implement its activity that is in an action.

For example in Turkana, we have 13 church network committees. These network committees are made of church network, different denomination, different churches, making a church network, which is overseen by a church network committee. Part of my role is just to make sure that I build and sustain the relationship between the organization and the county government and other stakeholders, including other non-governmental organization that maybe we are working with, or we are having any relationship with.

Then my second role is to ensure that coordination of the church mobilization is done according to the laid down procedure.

**Matthew:** I think many people have also been aware that Turkana in particular is going through some drought and even famine in some cases. Tell us some things that the global community, people beyond Turkana or beyond Kenya may not be aware of about that part of the country.

**Micah:** Currently, the drought situation is actually still burning and heating so hard. You'll find that we've not actually received adequate rainfall in the past. That is March, April, May. Last year's October, November, December. We hardly received any rain.

This means that...the cattle for the pastoral and agro-pastoral people are drastically reduced. It also means that the number of kilometers that people are going to fetch water has increased. Currently, we are talking about an average of 10 kilometers where people walk. We talk about 80% of water source having dried up. You will also see that the food prices have also spiked, which is also evident in the region.

**Matt:** I'm wondering how you're seeing God work through the church in the midst of those challenges in Turkana, in the midst of that crisis.

**Micah:** In the midst of the crisis, the church is actually trying. Maybe if I can just give a background of how the church looks like in Turkana. The Catholic has been the main church in

Turkana for a long period of time. In the current situation, you'll find that other churches also are cropping up in the areas that we are doing our programming. We have 21 different denomination. The voice of the church is being heard.

For a practical example, is one of the churches in our areas where we operate is a church that was planted there after we had put up a borehole because as we were doing the need analysis, those community people told us they have two agenda that they wanted us to intervene.

One, was water. The second thing they wanted was a church. Within a very short time, a church came up. We have a very vibrant church at that place right now. This church did not just stop there. You'll find Pastor Simon going an extra mile, reaching out, going to other villages that they don't have a church and preaching, and seeing into it that they also receive the word of God.

You will see people worshiping under trees. Not necessarily having a building or anything. They worship under the tree, and they believe that God is hearing them from there. The hand of God is actually transforming people in this community. So, the church is actually trying. Out of the empowerment that we have given the churches around here, the churches have become sensitive and other than the spiritual nourishment that they do, they are aware that it is also their role to serve the physical needs of the people around them.

You will find them wanting to follow the example of Jesus Christ, other than preaching, also meeting the needs of the people, although in a small way, but you will see that these are people who have the urge to reach out and also be able to assist those people in community with difficult challenges. That is what I can say. The church is here. The church is trying to meet the needs of the people in the community. Thank you.

**Matthew:** Wow, that is so encouraging to hear, Micah. I'm also struck, though, by just the number of crises that have occurred over and over again there in Turkana. How do you as a Christian and as a leader continue to have faith in the midst of those recurring crises?

**Micah:** Our hope in Jesus is supreme. That gives us a reason, being hopeful gives us a reason to serve. Actually, sometimes you get to the community, you are moved by whatever you see. But when you talk to the church, you talk to the people around the church, they are able to start thinking outside the box. They're able to start seeing from where they are sitting, "What can we do as a church?" Today, where we were, this is a group of people who their animals died. They are fresh guys who have just come to settle in a new area where actually, nobody is looking at them. There's no organization that has come even to interact with them.

We were there with part of the CNC, who are the leadership of the church. I posed a question to them, "What are you doing to assist these people?" Because when we say we will wait until maybe we get a donor funding, maybe we will get it later when these people are not here.

But one of the church leaders says, "No, we need to get back to our churches, talk to our churches in whichever way people can contribute either food items, clothing, then we are able to come and support these."

When I look at that, people are starting thinking about themselves what they can do to help such crises that are here. You see, the church growing to another level. The church is actually prepared it has the ability to transform the community.

**Matthew:** Wow. Micah, Can you tell us a story about a time when you've seen or experienced God's faithfulness in your life or through your work at World Relief?

**Micah:** Yes, yes, I was together with some of my colleagues. We had gone for our normal routine work, which was almost 60 kilometers from where we are. That time, I was actually serving as a project officer. When we came back, we found the riverbed was flooded. The riverbed was flooded, and we could not cross because of the strength and the speed of water and the amount of water in that riverbed.

In Turkana, there are places there are no bridges for you to cross over. So, what we decided, we just stopped and parked the vehicle, some distance away from the riverbed.

The four of us who are in the vehicle, all of us, we fell asleep. Not knowing that the river on the upstream, it had broken the bank. The place where we had parked the vehicle, all that place, the water had left where it is flowing, broke the bank, and where we were standing, it was all flooded. Lucky enough, there was another vehicle that was parking behind us. All of a sudden, we just heard the vehicle hooting, hooting and hooting. We woke up. Looking around where we were standing was filled with water.

The driver tried to start the vehicle. You know what? This vehicle refused to start. What we decided, we decided to alight. We struggled and towed the vehicle away from the water. In a span of 5 to 20 minutes, the water was so much, the water was so much, but for us we were safe, we were away, the vehicle was also safe.

To me, that scenario showed me that really our God is faithful and it doesn't matter the situation, He is able to come up in his own way and even save us whenever we are not even aware of the crisis or anything around us.

So, I look at the crisis here in Turkana. I'm hopeful that even if it happens to what extent, our God is watching and is able to restore us and to restore the people who are suffering in this particular drought, and at the end of it, the people will be safe.

**Matthew:** Thank you for that story, Micah. It's a reminder of God's faithfulness in the midst of hardship and a good reminder for all of us to be praying as so many people in Turkana are facing hardships.

We're nearing the end of our interview, but I wondered if you could say something to someone who's feeling discouraged or ready to give up on attending church, or maybe even give up on faith in God altogether, what would you tell them?

**Micah:** I will tell them sometime it's so easy to get discouraged. It's so easy for someone to get discouraged, but the one thing you can do to yourself is not to lose hope. However much things are tough, however much we experience harm in the road, we just have to deal with them. However much the wave or the wave or the tide might look big, but we just need to remain hopeful and face the situation the way it is.

Then the second thing I'll tell them is that everything happened for good, so to anybody who feel discouraged, to anybody who feel that they want not to go to church, I will tell them that Christ is the light. When your eyes are focused on the light, you will always get there despite how the

tunnel will be dark, but when you look at the light that is at the end of the tunnel, you are able to continue toiling toward the light that is ahead.

People should just continue having trust in God because our God is a faithful God. At his one convenient time, everything will work good according to his promises.

**Matthew:** Great. Last question for you, Micah. Do you believe the church can change the world? If so, why?

**Micah:** Yes. I believe the church can change the world. The first reason is the church is everywhere. You go to a village, you can miss the office of the chief, but you'll find a church. This church here, you'll find people congregating in that church come from different backgrounds, different areas in terms of professionalism and all that.

When these people come together, you will see there's a lot of untapped potential in the church. So, from where I sit, I believe the church can change the world.

**Matthew:** Thank you so much, Micah. As we close, would you mind saying a prayer over our time and for those who are listening?

**Micah:** Yes. Let us bow down and pray. Dear everlasting God, this particular evening, God, we want to humble before you. We humble before you, God, knowing that, Father, we are not worthy even to be among your flock because of our sinful nature. This particular moment as we bow down our head, we ask you that, Lord, in a special way forgive us and have a place for us in your kingdom, Jehovah. We remember our brothers and sisters all over the world, especially, Lord, the places that we are having this Turkana county, God. Father, you know the level of the drought situation that our county is experiencing, Lord, but your word encourages us that despite all challenges, you are God above our life. My Father, and my God, I want to welcome you to this land, Turkana, that, Lord, we may have a long-lasting solution for our community our God.

Father, we thank you even for all our partners, those who are standing with us in different platforms, our God. We pray, God, that you may continue blessing them, our God, that you may continue uplifting them as they even stand with this community, my Father. We thank you, God, for our partners from wherever they are and they're listening as from our God. We want to thank you because of connecting us and also asking that, Father, you may expand their territory, our God, that they may continue helping us and reaching out to us in times of our dire need, our God.

We thank you, God. We also want to remember our families. We pray for our families and ask too that, God, you may continue standing with our families and being with them at their point of need. We speak good health upon them, our God. We speak prosperity to our families in the mighty name of Jesus. We say to you and honor you, Lord, for it's in the name of Jesus I pray and believe. Amen.