

Pass It On®...

A Hand Up.

Maak Impact Chairman Mike Linton and founder Skyler Meine had a chance meeting with a humanitarian while on safari. The result is an organization dedicated to creating business owners in one of the longest-running refugee camps in the world.

For most people, running a successful business and raising a family check all the happiness boxes. For Mike Linton, one of the perks of growing a business was that it afforded a dream trip to Africa.

A safari gave Linton a chance to see a unique part of the world graced with majestic wildlife and centuries-old cultures. “On the last day of the trip, I was talking to a photographer. She told me about a woman who was heavily involved in humanitarian work. I asked if I could meet her,” Linton recalls.

With only a few hours available before Linton left the country, he had a conversation that would change the course of his life. “For years, I had been searching for a meaningful way to help refugees. A speaker in our church called all of us to do what we can, and in Nairobi, I found something I could do.”

On a return trip, Linton visited the Kakuma refugee camp in Northern Kenya. Erected in 1992, the sprawling camp houses nearly 300,000 refugees from war-torn Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia and 16 other countries. Many of its residents know no other way of life.

Kakuma is literally a nation within a nation, supported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and donations from nonprofits and staffed mostly by volunteers. Getting out requires mountains of paperwork, seemingly impossible-to-navigate procedures and a very small chance (1%-5%) of ever receiving resettlement elsewhere. In the meantime, residents must survive on the less than \$10 a month that UNHCR provides. So they do whatever they can — but if that blessed day comes when they can find asylum in another country, they need skills and education to adapt.

“We quickly learned that our friends in the camp are resourceful, eager learners and have ambitions,” Linton says. They are also the experts at what

needs to be done. They just need a little training, a few tools and some lifelong friends. “Our mission is to help them be self-reliant so they can survive without us.”

Projects so far have been small enterprises: Taking care of chickens and harvesting eggs for sale. A sewing shop. Participants apply to the Entrepreneur Training Center program to receive six weeks of education in accounting for their business, managing inventory and profit, etc. At the end of the course, they’re awarded a small grant and get started.

“We have regular check-ins to help them grow their business,” says Linton. “Most of the businesses have successfully grown, but we’ve seen a couple of businesses fail, and that can be discouraging. But at least they had the opportunity to learn something and try again.”
Maak Impact’s mission is to get people good living wage jobs.

“1,000 jobs in 1,000 days,” says Linton of the nonprofit he cofounded in 2021. “We have nearly 100 so far, and we’re just getting started.”

It turns out that a little education and focus can go a long way. It takes the right know-how, some patience, and somebody willing to put the work in to improve their life. In its first two years, Maak Impact grew from a businessman with a desire to help to a full-fledged school, instructors, volunteers, a networked economy of goods and services and a lot of happy families.

“I can now afford food for my daughter and for her to go to school,” says Dusabe, a woman who now sells 75 eggs a day from her little chicken operation. As Linton reflects on the last year, “I have learned that these people don’t need a handout; they need a hand up.”

Make an Impact... [PassItOn.com](https://www.passiton.com)

By The Foundation for a Better Life®

The Foundation for a Better Life® promotes positive values to live by and pass along to others.

Copyright © 2025 | The Foundation for a Better Life®
All rights reserved. | www.passiton.com

Available under a Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 License (international):
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>