**Richmond Wandera**

Words by Richard Murphy with Ezra Ndagije

**“Poverty began to speak to me as a child. I felt I was nothing. I didn’t matter. Nobody cared to know my name.”**

Richmond Wandera was born into the family of a prominent Ugandan lawyer. Life was turned upside down at the age of eight when his father was murdered. With no income of her own to afford the rent of their upmarket address, Richmond’s mother moved the family to their new home - a 12 x 12’ room in one of Uganda’s largest slums.

Life was very different for Richmond in the slums. One day, his mother explained that there was no money for food so Richmond was sent onto the streets to fend for himself. Hunger and thirst began to take their toll both physically and mentally. He remembers how it felt to live in poverty with great sadness: “Poverty began to speak to me as a child. I felt I was nothing. I didn’t matter. Nobody cared to know my name.”

A Compassion project operating in a nearby church heard about the families’ need and registered Richmond into their programme. He soon received news that he had been sponsored by 15-year-old Heather. “I cannot find the words to describe the joy that filled our home when we got the news,” he explains with a smile.

In 2001 the family received another piece of good news. Richmond had been invited to join Compassion’s leadership programme – an opportunity to attend university as a sponsored student. With excitement in his voice, Richmond confesses, “The possibility of joining the university was a positive testimony that impacted my mother so much that she made a commitment to the Lord.”

Richmond went on to study for a Masters in the United States, where he received a vision to strengthen the African church. On his return home, he set up the Pastors Discipleship Network, a programme that trains, strengthens and equips pastors throughout Africa.

The ripples of Heather’s decision to sponsor a child are still travelling across Africa.

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[Watch Richmond’s film](https://vimeo.com/114536359)