

## The Last Hunger Season by Roger Thurow



Review by: Genie Bolduc

The Last Hunger Season begins by illustrating the prevalence of hunger and its correspondence to agricultural production in Kenya by pointing out that many children are named Wanjala-hunger, meaning that they were born in the season of hunger, when their family's food ran out between harvests. Mr. Thurow uses the stories of four One Acre Fund **microloan** clients and their families to illustrate the constant struggles that afflict farmers in Western Kenya. Decisions that the farmers make and remake affect their ability to feed their families and lift them up through access to education. The constant struggle to feed their children and selves while paying school fees and trying to invest in alternate sources of income, such as cows, chickens or trees leave the clients stressed and exhausted, working from before dawn to past dusk with little to eat.

Andrew Youn, the founder of One Acre Fund, with his MBA from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Business, asserts that what these farmers need is access to better drought resistant seed and fertilizer to give them adequate yield and that distribution is the key to helping them. He pointed out that there is no lack of distribution of Coca Cola and cell phone service, why can't we make sure that farmers have access to the quality inputs that they need when they need it, letting them pay it back over time?

The book explores the methods that OAF uses to teach clients the principles of proper planting and weeding, for instance, having a line of women squat down and have another line of women behind them pushing down on their shoulders to show that the squatting women, who represent corn seedlings, cannot lift up and grow with the women in back of them, representing weeds, sapping their energy. It is an interesting exploration of how OAF teaches planting techniques and offers the tools to get higher yield while struggling to get new strains of drought resistant seeds developed so as to better serve their clients. It also illustrates how empowerment of the men and women and their group solidarity helps them to succeed.

My least favorite parts of the book are the interspersed bits on government policy and diminishing funding of agricultural programs as it came off as more of a lecture than presentation of information.

All in all, this is a great read for anyone who wishes to know more about One Acre Fund, the work that they do, and the effect that it has on hard working farming families in western Kenya. It

is a must read for Whole Foods Market Team Member Volunteers about to embark on the volunteer program to Kenya to meet microcredit clients for One Acre Fund and do community service work.