

# teaching business skills to Ugandan pastors

| BY BECCA BROADDUS

**I**n Uganda, the majority of residents are Christian. Yet, many believe in witch doctors and the evil nature of business. It's a region where, traditionally, Christians believe God blesses His faithful followers with material wealth. As a result, business and the learning of business skills are discouraged. Ugandan pastors and their wives who seek business skills have been historically deemed as mistrusting of God and His will.

**IN A COUNTRY OF APPROXIMATELY 30 MILLION PEOPLE, HALF OF WHOM LIVE ON LESS THAN \$1.25 A DAY, LACKING BASIC BUSINESS SKILLS CAN BE DEVASTATING—ESPECIALLY WHEN LEADING A CHURCH.**

Richmond Wandera, president and chief executive officer of Pastors Discipleship Network (PDN), saw the need for a shift in perceptions. As a college graduate, and later as a pastor and an Accounting professor at Uganda Christian University, he decided to be an impetus for change in the country's church leadership.





**W**andera founded PDN in 2008 with the goal to equip pastors and their wives in East Africa with ministerial and life skills to facilitate better ministry performance and personal development. Pastors Discipleship Network does so through mentorship programs, conferences and resource centers. Its mission is “to train and equip African pastors to study, practice and teach God’s Word accurately.”

PDN networks and partners with other individuals and organizations to achieve this mission. One of its first partners, Baylor’s Accounting & Business Law Department, partnered with PDN in 2009.

PDN and the Accounting & Business Law Department have joined together to equip pastors to serve as bi-vocational leaders. Since becoming partners, more than 1,200 pastors and pastors’ wives have been equipped with business skills.

**“FROM AN ORGANIZATIONAL STANDPOINT, PARTNERING WITH BAYLOR UNIVERSITY HAS PLACED PASTORS DISCIPLESHIP NETWORK WITH A WHOLE NEW LEVEL OF CREDIBILITY,”** Wandera said. “Before the partnership, PDN

was a small organization serving 400 pastors and pastors’ wives. We knew we wanted to address business skills, but we felt ill equipped. That has changed.”

On the annual mission trip in May 2014, 19 Baylor Business students, recent graduates, faculty and staff members flew to Entebbe, Uganda, to share their knowledge and faith. Led by Jason MacGregor, mission trip coordinator and associate professor of Accounting, the business students co-hosted a three-day business conference in Kampala, Uganda, for local pastors and their wives. The conference, which was titled “Mastering the Land,” focused on the balance of business and pastorship. Topics covered included financial accounting, leadership skills, integrity in business, how to balance roles, time management and more.

“The thing I will take most from this trip is the focus the Ugandans had on learning,” junior Accounting major Taylor Drake said. “In America, we take for granted our education. I am more grateful for the chance to learn and be engaged in my studies because not everyone has that chance.”

For the majority of the conference, the more than 100 attendees were divided into four groups: a women’s group, a men’s group and two hand-picked groups that provided a detailed focus on more difficult concepts. The Baylor Business students helped teach each section.

**“THIS TRIP HELPED ME IN MY LEARNING AND TEACHING OF BUSINESS, AS WELL AS IMPROVING MY SPIRITUAL GROWTH,” JUNIOR MARKETING MAJOR HANNAH RAUCKMAN SAID.** “The conference gave me a chance to learn from other cultures. Hearing my team teach others gave me confidence for the days I had to go up and speak publicly. I got the opportunity to teach 40 women about various topics, which was a great experience.”

Lecturer Tim Thomasson, with the aid of recent Accounting graduate Christina Ramser and senior Accounting student Natalie Osenbaugh, taught a group of 15 how to keep accounting records—a task that traditionally takes Accounting students four semesters to learn.



“It just showed their willingness, want and need to learn,” Ramser said. “Seeing their faces as they struggled to understand the concepts was hard, but it was my job to be able to explain why and help them understand the process. The outcome of the struggle was amazing. People with no schooling and very little education were creating financial statements.”

The other hand-picked group, referred to as “Bear Pit,” applied concepts from ABC’s reality competition series “Shark Tank” into an event aimed to equip, train and invest in aspiring entrepreneurs to help support their ministry and families. Recent Accounting graduate Molly Campbell and junior Baylor Business Fellow Hanna Kattilakoski, led by 2012 Baylor Business alumnus Doug Kimball, coached the entrepreneurs on how to create and execute a business plan. It was Kimball’s fifth year to join Baylor on its trip to Uganda.

“I believe we have impacted the Ugandan pastors and their wives in a way that will transform their ministries and communities for generations,” Kimball said. “Each one of them bears such a heavy weight as leaders, it’s really encouraging to see that the training we provided can be utilized in a way that really makes a difference.”

At the end of the conference, three Bear Pit participants presented their business plans to a panel of judges, which included MacGregor and Thomasson among others. After the presentations, the panel was able to invest in the businesses proposed. Eva, a leader in her church and community, was one of the Bear Pit participants that impressed the Baylor investment judges during her pitch. She walked away with a well-developed plan and an investor for her mushroom-growing business.

“The kindness and reception of the pastors was overwhelming,” Kimball said. “Despite the hardships they face on a day-to-day basis, the overflow of joy and love of Christ was evident and encouraging to all of us. As I heard some of their stories, it really put things in perspective and reminded me what’s really important.”

The 10-day trip, which included time at Suubi Children’s Center in rural Bukeka and a sightseeing trip in Sipi Falls as well as the business conference, was ultimately a mission trip. From daily devotionals to theological discussions, the Baylor team sought to understand God’s role in work and poverty.

“This trip has been impactful in many ways, including with my faith,” Kattilakoski said. **“IT WAS SUCH A BLESSING TO SEE A COUNTRY SO FULL OF FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE. I MAY HAVE COME TO TEACH BUSINESS, BUT IN REALITY, I LEARNED MORE ABOUT LIFE, FAITH AND BUSINESS THAN I COULD HAVE IMAGINED.”**