



Visiting Bobo- A Refugee Turned Business Owner

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Last week, fellow ONE field organizer Kim Smith and I traveled with FORGE to the Meheba Refugee Camp in northern Zambia.

In addition to building the world's largest library in a refugee camp, schools, a women's center, and assistance for refugees, FORGE, also has a micro-finance project that works to empower refugees and help with business skills.

Recently, the FORGE Microfinance Institute helped invest in agricultural loans to select farming refugees and provided much needed and expensive fertilizer for corn crops. Already it has proven to be a huge success as the farmers that received the fertilizer loan are having record corn growth.



We also paid a visit to another loan recipient, Bobo, a Congolese refugee turned baker. The first day we stopped in at his bakery, Bobo was not there and we were told that he closed his shop to travel around and stock up on corn and flour. The next day we returned and we spoke with him about his business.

Originally Bobo received a small loan to start his business. He did very well and when his rent went up in the market, he applied for another loan to build his own free standing bakery that allowed him to be profitable, pay back his loans, and provide for his wife and daughter. When we asked about the global food crisis and rising prices, Bobo took out all of his receipts and showed us the dramatic increase in the price of corn and flour. Being a successful baker and businessman, Bobo was fortunate enough to be able to stock up on his ingredients as prices continue to rise.

-Matthew Bartlett, ONE Field Organizer

