

And The Children Shall Lead Us by Barry Childs

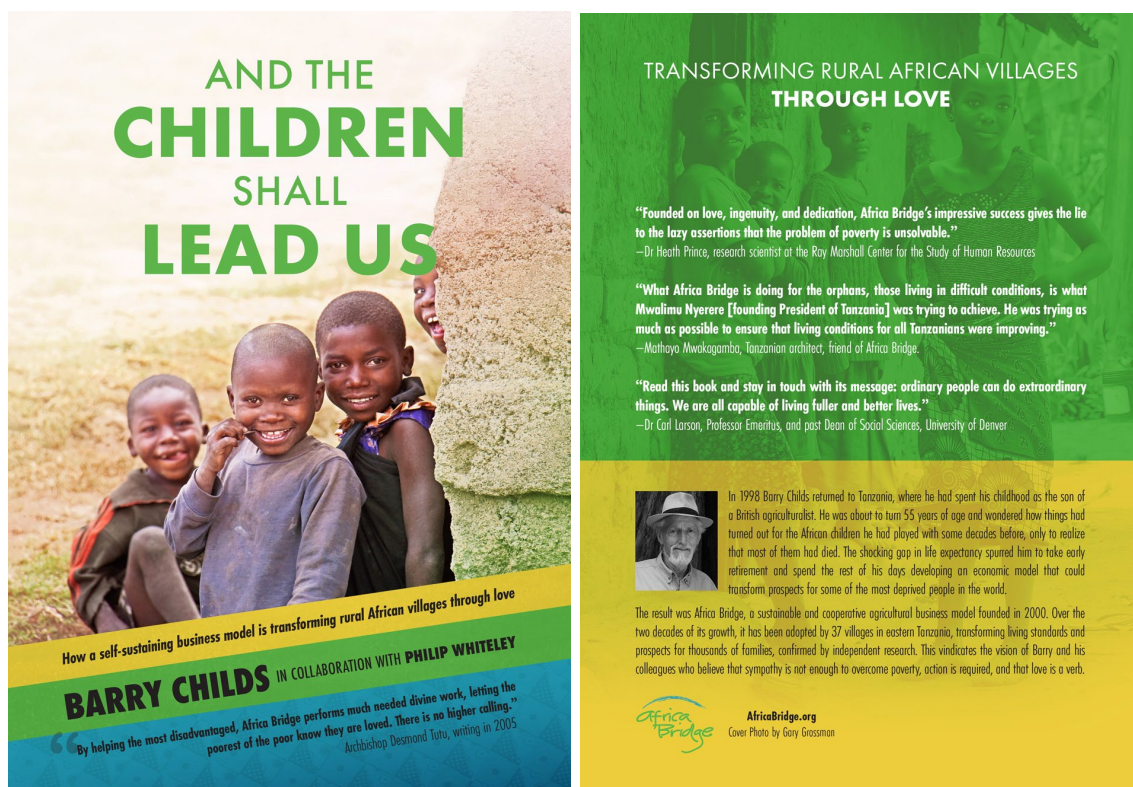
Non-Fiction/Memoir - Published by [Breakthrough Books](#), 08/04/24

Genre: Social Sciences, Sustainable Development and Aid, Philanthropy, African Interest

Synopsis, notable commentary and testimonials

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, writing in 2005

'By helping the most disadvantaged, Africa Bridge performs much needed divine work, letting the poorest of the poor know they are loved. There is no higher calling.'



Part I - What [Africa Bridge](#) Does

- Africa Bridge aims to transform the lives and prospects of vulnerable children in rural African communities affected by poverty. It does this through establishing agricultural cooperatives and Most Vulnerable Children's Committees (MVCCs) in a ward, which is a collection of villages.
- The approach starts with listening to children's perspectives during initial Future Search meetings. Children are seen as the "clients" and their views help shape the programs.
- It differs from traditional aid programs by creating sustainable businesses, and from conventional business investment by measuring returns in social and financial terms. It encourages both entrepreneurialism and social development.

- Impact is measured at the program level through quantitative and qualitative surveys, rather than just looking at national or regional aggregates. This helps understand cause-and-effect relationships of interventions on poverty reduction and prospects.

Part II - Findings from Africa Bridge

- A 5-year program in the Kisondele Ward in Tanzania showed significant improvements in living conditions, assets, nutrition, and reduction of extreme poverty for participating households.
- An independent study validated these results and concluded the model appears unique in its combination of features and focus on vulnerable children.

Part III - Implications of the Findings

- Building on inherent cultural strengths of communities is important, such as agricultural knowledge, respect for education, and community cohesion.
- Investing time in training and preparation is essential - the model requires patience and long-term commitment.
- Giving women leading roles contributes to social and economic outcomes. Female empowerment has wider benefits.
- Continual learning from experience, iterations and evidence is key to improving the model.
- Having a sense of purpose and passion is a driving force, based on improving children's prospects.

Part IV - How Africa Bridge Came About

- Founder Barry Childs' experiences growing up in Tanzania and memories of poverty sparked the ambition to start Africa Bridge.
- After a corporate career, the idea took shape through leadership seminars, research trips and meetings in Tanzania and South Africa.
- An orphanage was the first initiative but after recognizing its limitations was replaced by the sustainable cooperative model.
- The model developed through continual learning from experience over 8 years. Independent research now aims to share findings and encourage wider adoption.

There are aspects of the Africa Bridge approach that seem to be unique or innovative compared to other development programs, based on the book's content:

- The requirement for agricultural cooperatives to "pass on" assets like cows or seedlings to new members. This helps the co-op grow and benefits more people, unlike models where members just retain profits.
- The close partnership between the income-generating cooperatives and the Most Vulnerable Children's Committees (MVCCs) - linking economic and social objectives in the community.
- Making improved prospects for vulnerable children the central goal and focus of all activities. Many programs focus more on assets, jobs, or technology.

- Letting children lead the initial discussions and shape the priorities, rather than just having programs designed top-down. This brings a fresh perspective.
- The combination of giving grants/assets to get people started, with an emphasis on building sustainable and profitable businesses - avoiding dependence on aid.
- The 5-year model of establishing a program with training, then withdrawing direct support, leaves behind a cluster of enterprises.

The holistic community-based approach tailored to local contexts, with interlinked social and economic components focused on vulnerable children, is both innovative and impactful. The independent research cited in Chapter 5 highlights these differentiating factors.

What they say about Africa Bridge:

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, writing in 2005

'I was moved when Barry Childs spoke to me some years ago of his dream to help children orphaned by HIV/AIDS and their families in Tanzania. By helping the most disadvantaged, Africa Bridge performs much needed divine work, letting the poorest of the poor know they are loved. There is no higher calling.'

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, 1931-2021, humanitarian church leader and anti-apartheid campaigner. Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984.

Dr Heath Prince

'Africa Bridge does what precious few other programs have managed to do – it lifts children out of poverty, allowing them to tap into their full potential, and setting them on a course to break the inter-generational cycles of poverty that have robbed them and their communities of the opportunity to live lives of their own choosing, rather than those determined by privation. Founded on love, ingenuity, and dedication, Africa Bridge's impressive success gives the lie to the lazy assertions that the problem of poverty is unsolvable.'

Dr Heath Prince, PhD Director, Ray Marshall Center, University of Texas at Austin, and Senior Development Economist at La Isla Network.

Dr Lwitiko Kadenge Mwalukumba

'In 2008 I dreamed of becoming a doctor. However, I had struggled to even go to primary school. I could not imagine how I would be able to attend high school and university. I felt I was trapped. With the arrival of Africa Bridge in my village of Igembe my dream became a reality.'

Dr Lwitiko Kadenge Mwalukumba, Igembe Village.

Tunsi Belega

'The women in our corn co-op began to realize that we were growing higher yielding corn than the men. We concluded if we could grow better corn than the men, we could do anything better than them.'

Tunsi Belega, Africa Bridge farmer and entrepreneur, Lufumbi Village.

Jacob and Garannetti Mwakakipesile

'Our cow called 'Hope' gave us the resources we need to ensure all our six grandchildren receive a high school education and have the opportunity to go to university.'

Jacob and Garannetti Mwakakipesile, Bujesi Village.

Granny Witness

'Look what the pig did.' She has made it possible for me to build a new concrete brick house with a tin roof and real furniture. She also helped me to build three shops which I can rent, which gives me regular income.'

Granny Witness, Idweli Village.

Femida Kupda

'The [Africa Bridge] program really benefited our community. We faced a challenge of absenteeism, where many children were unable to attend school sessions due to a lack of school supplies, but since Africa Bridge supported us with the supplies, children now attend school regularly.'

Femida Kupda, Empowerment Facilitator, Mbambo Village, Kambasegela Ward.

Theresa Mgimbo, Headteacher

'With Africa Bridge's help in the villages, people have income from selling milk and they can now support children with school needs.'

Theresa Mgimbo, Kisondele Secondary School Head Mistress.

Susan Newman

'Africa Bridge is the embodiment of an organization's successful blueprint to address the harsh realities of under-served families and children in Tanzania. They provide the capital and training to deliver self-empowerment, self-sufficiency and sustainability.'

Susan Kendall Newman, Newman's Own Foundation Community Partners' Program Participant.

Julitha Mupwa

'The Africa Bridge projects have helped our community to change their perspective on the stereotype that a woman is not able to keep a dairy cow. Now the community believes that a woman can manage to keep any kind of cattle.'

Julitha Mupwa, Kambasegela Village

Kisa Stambule Kajuni

'Thank you to Africa Bridge for giving us support to include knowledge on parenting, and for the modern ways of project shed construction and care for chickens.'

Kisa Stambule Kajuni, Isuba Village, Kisondele

Ben Fowler

'We had the opportunity to study the Africa Bridge model through an endline evaluation we conducted of one of its latest initiatives. Having lived in and worked on a variety of initiatives providing support in rural East Africa, what I find particularly noteworthy about the Africa Bridge model is the commitment to a time-bound period of support and careful selection of communities with strong need but also commitment to change. By not planning to stay in a community indefinitely, Africa Bridge remains focused on identifying the most effective inputs'

that will help to kickstart an ongoing and community-led development process.'

Ben Fowler, Co-Founder and CEO, MarketShare Associates

Carl Sardegna

'Barry Childs has successfully integrated business strategies with his first-hand knowledge of the Tanzanian culture to create a proven process that is a game changer in the struggle to create a cost-effective model to alleviate extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa.'

Carl Sardegna, retired CEO Blue Cross Blue Shield, Maryland, and retired CEO Green Crescent Insurance.

Dr. Peter Collett (comment abridged)

'Barry and I were both born in Africa. Growing up in a colonial environment, we were constantly being told that modern, advanced societies were the sole source of innovation. Barry's book provides a fitting rebuttal to this preposterous idea, because it demonstrates – as the ancient Romans knew all too well – that there is always something new coming out of Africa.'

Barry has devised a totally novel, Africa-based business model that places local participants at the heart of the process, empowering them as active partners, giving them dignity and responsibility, and enabling them to become the co-authors of their own destiny.'

This timely book tells a truly fascinating story. Tanzanians have a Swahili saying, Asisafirie nyota ya mwenzio, which translates as, 'Don't set sail using someone else's star'. That's exactly what Barry has done – he's found his own lodestar'

Dr Peter Collett, Former Oxford Don, psychologist, author and broadcaster.

Dr Kenneth Lema (comment abridged)

'I got to know Barry Childs in 2002 when he was keen to return and contribute to Tanzania's development, having grown up the son of an agricultural officer here. Particularly interesting were his opinions on African development challenges, for example he believed the traditional advisory role of African elders was being progressively marginalized as African countries modernized. Given the weak societal institutions and reliance on oral history, this trend implied the loss of a key asset to African development.'

He was also a firm believer in participatory approaches to finding lasting solutions rather than attempting to solve such issues with strategies and techniques alien to those communities. Driven by his love for Africa and Tanzania in particular, Barry was keen to contribute by identifying key challenges, finding the required resources in the developed world and then applying his own skills and theories to demonstrate their effectiveness.'

I was immediately impressed by Barry's down-to-earth, practical and hands-on approach and more so by his commitment to Tanzania even after being away for so long. It has been a gratifying experience to see him translate the vision into reality. I have witnessed Africa Bridge establish one of the most successful programs for vulnerable children in the country. His energy and enthusiasm is boundless, and the work of Africa Bridge is admired not only in Tanzania but also in many other parts of the world. Personally, I have been hugely inspired by Barry and have benefited from his counsel in my professional work over the years.'

Dr Kenneth Lema, Retired NGO Executive and Founder Mpingo, Selous

And the Children Shall Lead Us is available from: (add live links to Amazon and Kobo) and to order from bookshops (ISBN 9781739379377).