



A Review - March 2026

Over many years, industrialised countries in the North have given the so-called poor countries in the South billions in development aid, but with little measurable result. Millions of children across the world still go to bed hungry. According to a recently published book written by development economist Benny Dembitzer, “The Global Famine Game”, the billions given seldom reach the people they are intended to benefit.

When we look back and assess Discover’s work over the past 12 years, we can conclude from the feedback we have received from our partners in Africa, that it has been successful. A very high proportion of the funds generously given by our supporters has benefitted the families and communities we set out to support.

Some Discover partners report that, as a result of planting trees and promoting agroforestry, many fewer children go to bed hungry, many families themselves produce enough to eat and even have a surplus to sell, so that they can pay for school fees and uniforms for their children. They even report that many men who had abandoned their families and moved to the towns in search of work have returned, because they have seen that life in their home rural area now opens up more possibilities for earning a living than they ever realised.

Official bodies also recognise that Discover’s work has a positive impact on entire villages: Eric Kihuluka founded and leads the community based group, “Mikwano“, meaning “Friendship”, over 20 years ago in Kaliro District, Uganda. He writes that many people in influential positions have seen that Mikwano has made a dramatic, positive impact in their district. Eric reports that they cannot believe that Mikwano is not also a large organisation with many resources.

Discover partners receive no salary for their work that they undertake in the name of Discover. Some receive a very modest salary or allowance for their work with a local organisation. Sometimes Discover has been able to pay a very modest allowance to our most active partners.

Why is the work of Discover and its partners in Africa successful in places where governments and large organisations have failed? I put this question to Eric and other partners in Africa and received the following responses:

1. The work is long-term. Discover worked over a period of 12 years, and Coordinator Keith Lindsey has known most partners for approaching 20 years. As a result of working together for so many years, Keith and Discover partners trust and have confidence in each other.
2. Discover Partners work in such a way that everyone benefits, irrespective of their level of education and literacy. When they conduct training activities, they use a hands-on approach with demonstrations and giving group members the chance to make things themselves. They also take their members to visit other groups that have more expertise in some activities for an exchange of ideas and experience.

3. Discover partners are themselves members of the community in which you they work. They grew up there, they speak the local language and dialect, they know how people think and they know the challenges people face.
4. They know from their own experience the essential things that people need – that is food to eat, clean water to drink, treatment for their sicknesses and enough income to buy clothes and pay for school fees and uniforms for their children. All their activities are designed to meet those needs. For example:
 - They plant trees to provide shade for growing vegetables, to provide firewood and fruits for nutrition.
 - They teach people to grow vegetables that grow in your district and that people want to eat.
 - They teach people how to keep animals and how to use their dung to keep the soil fertile.
 - They work with schools to plant trees and establish gardens so that children learn practical skills for their own survival.
 - They teach people how to use locally available plants to make herbal remedies for many common health challenges.
5. People see that they are prepared to get your hands dirty themselves. For example, they do not simply tell people how to plant a tree, they plant it with them.
6. What little money they have or receive goes directly into the work. They have no administrative expenses of, for example, renting an office, paying a secretary, having computers and printers or buying and maintaining 4-wheel drive vehicles.
7. They have significant personal skills. For example:
 - They speak comfortably with all people, whatever their rank or status, for example with young children, women and men, and with heads of organisations, with religious leaders and politicians.
 - They have teambuilding and team leaderships skills.
 - They understand the importance of informing and involving all key people in the district, e.g. local government officials and elected members, church and mosque leaders.
8. They work very hard and long hours.
9. They are their own boss – they do not have to comply with the demands or policies of any higher official.
10. Their motivation comes from seeing the positive results of what they do. It does not depend on their salary level, status or any other material reward. Emmanuel Masereka, who works in communities on the slopes of the Rwenzori Mountains in Uganda, added, “We love our work and we love our people in the community”.