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Kenya: Kitale to Nakuru

I traveled down the North Rift Valley, Kitale to Nakuru. Kitale is near Mt. Elgon, where that day a news ticker read: “62 bodies found in Mt. Elgon forest.” Was this post-election murders or militia with arms from the Sudan-Uganda border, I don’t know. This received little to no additional coverage, 62 bodies. 62 bodies is less of a concern than the corrupt sale of a hotel? From Kitale to Nakuru, seeing thousands of people living in thousands of tents displaced from the post-election violence that rocked Kenya many months ago. In Nakuru, I watch from a balcony as a man is savagely beaten by a club-bearing store guard in front of a crowd of at least 50 street-goers. His face entirely red as he screams painfully, helplessly in front of all. His shirt soaked in so much blood. My outrage over such injustice is quickly channeled into the common insular desire -- that will not happen to me or anyone I love. All this before I am to speak with community organizers.

I will not tell them what they have done wrong. I will not tell them what they need to do. I will not even mention the bodies in the forest, the IDPs, or the public savagery. I don’t have the solution to improve their lives, their communities, their country. They do. I am here to see that they have the opportunity to improve society from within, with their own solutions. I am here to see that they gain access to funds from a place where giving is so opportune (America) because they live in a place where society holds tremendous potential for improvement (Africa). That is why I started Covalent Global Capital.

Covalent Global Capital operates in ways that are truly innovative to philanthropy and uniquely important to Africa. With Covalent Global, select donors are able to leverage their donations financially and internationally to have a recognizable impact on global poverty. What has been the exclusive domain of multimillion/multibillion dollar foundations, the ability to conduct international giving with a local and foreign presence, is now possible with Covalent Global. Our work supports charities in urban slums, rural villages, and remote towns in Africa enabling them to provide public goods and charitable services to the most impoverished communities (their own).

Jason Higbee

Executive Director & Founder

Covalent Global Capital

Mission Statement

Covalent Global Capital operates to assist philanthropic giving to African-led charitable causes.

Covalent Global Capital has three primary functions:

- 1) provide a two-way facility to connect American donors with African-led charities for direct giving opportunities,
- 2) act as a grant and due diligence repository to serve the fiduciary responsibilities of donor advised funds, foundations, and other charitable giving vehicles and
- 3) provide a reference source and guide to safe and effective social giving.

Executive Summary

From the perspective of a charity in Africa, Covalent Global looks like an information resource for their own community development and a direct link to international funding. Covalent Global supports charity networks by providing timely information on charities and their communities. For instance, through mailings to community leaders, village chiefs, and smaller charity networks, communities and charities are aware of programs going on through-out the country. Travel through-out the country is often far too costly for most community charities, but through Covalent Global publications they can be aware of others working in their fields of interest. This fosters learning and improvement through effective knowledge reuse. Covalent Global provides information and network support; however our marquee service is that we provide a link to international funding.

The many problems these communities face are often more basic than might be expected and what is needed is often not supplies or volunteers, it's money. It is incredibly hard to get money into African-led charities; however it is this support that is critically needed and can have the greatest social impact. Unlike others, our approach is not to fund charities. We don't decide which charities receive funding and which do not; such actions would conflict with our ability to collect and distribute reliable information. Our approach is to be an intermediary. Covalent Global assists partner foundations with due diligence and grant monitoring that meets and exceeds stringent compliance standards. This enables grant funds to flow directly from donor foundations to their intended charity.

**Executive Summary: Part 1,
From the perspective of a
charity in Africa**

Executive Summary: Part 2, From the perspective of a donor in America

From the perspective of a donor in America, Covalent Global looks like a institute for learning on philanthropy, aid, and Africa and also a place to carry out highly effective grant making. Twice a year, each spring and fall, a select group of people are admitted to Covalent's donor class. Admission is highly competitive and based on the quality of the applicant. Admission is accepted by placing a minimum contribution in a donor advised fund (DAF) at a partner foundation. Within six months, the donor will make an advisory recommendation on which African-led charities are supported. But first, the donor will undergo a learning program to build perspective on philanthropy, aid, and Africa during the first three months. The next 1-2 months are spent engaging in a more in depth and personally directed manner with Covalent Global's information and resources in Africa. They explore their interests, tap Covalent's network of thousands of charitable projects, and gain information that is timely and contextually relevant. They then make their grant(s). It doesn't end there. The results of their grant(s) are monitored through Covalent's local presence in Africa. The donor's impact is not imagined -- it is not something they hope did well, hope was used wisely -- they are able to see the impact throughout the life of the grant with Covalent grant monitoring.

Covalent Global operations in many ways mirror that of a private university. Like a university, Covalent Global is able to provide financial aid in the form of loans and "fellowships". The financial aid comes from Covalent Global's endowment and assures that we are able to select the most promising applicants irrespective of personal wealth. Covalent's endowment enables both merit and need-based fellowships, which are direct contributions to the admitted donor's DAF. Fellowships often reflect the legacy of the contributor to Covalent's endowment. For instance, a fellowship can reflect a contributor's commitment to select protected classes in the U.S., such as minority women, and ultimately support the work of African-led charities and their communities. Loans, much like fellowships, offer immediate financial leverage to admitted donor funds. Loans provide the ability to reallocate charitable giving both across charitable substitutes or across time and enable donors to make the commitment required of African-led charities.

One of the most important aspects of this program is that is composed of many individual decision makers. Diverse opinions and critical perspectives are not washed away through aggregation or organizational group think. Rather Covalent Global and its donor-base are dynamic, renewing itself every spring and fall with each new class. Covalent is also focused on the long-run. Alumni often share their experience with new donors and they gain life-long access to exclusive Covalent Global resources and grantmaking support in Africa.