

'Through my tailoring skills my siblings are back in school!'

Dorcas Amolo didn't have an easy start to life. Her father inherited her grandfather's property and along with the property came the responsibility of looking after many members of the extended family. It proved to be a heavy burden to carry.

'We had so many people in our home and because of this we never had enough household basics, like soap and sugar,' explains Dorcas. 'As kids we always had to be alert when it was mealtime otherwise we would miss out as there wasn't enough to go around.'

Dorcas and her siblings had to drop out of school because they were needed to plant crops in the garden to feed the large extended family. Around this time Dorcas overheard discussions about marrying her off and was always afraid whenever a man visited the home – fearing she would be taken away for an arranged marriage.

Running Away

Dorcas was desperate not to be forced into marriage so she ran away to a Pentecostal church in her village, knowing they had saved girls from early marriage before. 'I gave my life to Christ and the church leaders told me that Christ would protect me.'

'My family were Muslims and my father was furious when he found out I'd become a Christian, he rejected me immediately and subjected me to even more work so I wouldn't have time to meet up with people from church. I was forbidden from speaking to my younger siblings in case I 'spoiled' them.

'Faced with so much emotional torture and loneliness I began to doubt if I had made the right decision. It was at this time I was granted the opportunity to join Kira Farm Development Centre.

A Year on the Farm

'When I first joined Kira my body was shocked by the sudden switch from hard manual labour to a more relaxed existence and I spent the first couple of weeks experiencing lots of pain and feeling sick.

'It was a hard start, but I loved my time at Kira and made sure I used my time to rest and to learn as much as I possibly could.

'One of the most important things I learnt at Kira was the importance of forgiveness and loving others. I was surrounded by hatred at home and I simply didn't know how to love people.

'When we had a two week break from our training I went home and smiled at everyone lots. My family hated me but I made a point of showing that I loved them and slowly it began to make a difference.

'We were told to invite our parents when we received our graduation certificates and I was so shocked when my dad actually came. He said he'd noticed a big change in me when I was home for the short break and he wanted to see the kind of place I was studying in.

'To my surprise, since I've been home he has been relaxed about my faith and the personal decisions I've made.

'I have put into practise the tailoring skills I acquired at Kira and my small business is going well. I am able to save over £2.00 a day and four children in my family have gone back to school because I can provide them with books and pens and make their school uniforms! I can't believe I've been able to make such a big difference in their lives!

No longer a slave

'I am no longer treated like a slave in my family, but as a daughter. My father, who used to forbid me from talking to my siblings, now asks me to have a word with them when they are misbehaving.

'I have delivered training in Farming God's Way (conservation farming) with my youth group at church thanks to everything I learnt at Kira. When my father heard I had done this he allocated me some land for personal farming. This is truly remarkable – it's very unusual for a girl to be given part of the family land.

'My church thought I would stay with them when I returned to Kira because they knew my father hated me. When they discovered I moved back home they were very interested in finding out how I managed to live with people who despised me.

'I shared with them the restorative justice approaches I had learnt in Kira and once a month I have the opportunity to talk about these approaches in church.

'This month I am delivering training Farming God's Way for our whole church. If everyone adopts this approach to farming they will be able to live a better life, have more food to eat and money to meet their needs.

'On the land my father gave me I have invested in rice farming and spent £45 on planting. I expect to make a profit of £220.

'I am so grateful to Amigos, and my sponsor, for enabling me to share the love of Christ and make a difference in my family and community.'