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# THE CrossFit JOURNAL

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## Dallin Frampton: CrossFit in Kenya

CrossFit is changing lives in Africa. Emily Beers asks  
Dallin Frampton how the affiliate community can help.

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By Emily Beers

September 2012

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Staff/CrossFit Journal

When Dallin Frampton speaks, his wisdom and experience radiate from his words. He's calm yet passionate. Creative yet level-headed. And then you discover that you're talking to a 22-year-old.

But this 22-year-old isn't your ordinary wide-eyed college student living off beer and macaroni and cheese. This 22-year-old has employees working for him and life experiences and responsibilities of men twice his age.

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**True to his hands-on nature, Frampton started helping out from the minute he arrived in Kenya.**

Frampton, an anthropology student at the University of Utah, is the man behind the CrossFit School in Kenya, the project manager of the entire CrossFit mission in Kenya.

Frampton isn't your average 22-year-old, and he wasn't your average 19-year-old. That's how old Frampton was when he heard a voice inside his head urging him to get out there and do something big.

"Back in August 2009, I heard about an organization called Koins for Kenya from a friend. And I know it sounds so cheesy and corny, but I just had this calling," Frampton said of how it all started.

"There was just this little voice in my head. It was like someone was saying, 'Dude, you gotta go to Kenya,'" he continued.

Frampton listened to the calling and started to pick his friend's brain.

"We sat down together one day and I just started asking questions," Frampton said.

After gathering all the information he needed, Frampton marched over to the Koins for Kenya head office to find out how to get to Africa.

"So I get down to this guy's office—to the executive director's office—and he says, 'What do you want to do?'" Frampton remembered.

"I want to go to Kenya. I know you only do short week-long expeditions, but I want to go for a while," Frampton told the executive director.

The man wasn't sure how serious Frampton was, and he certainly wasn't going to hand the young 19-year-old the keys to Koins for Kenya that easily. Instead, he told Frampton to raise US\$10,000 and come up with a project idea.

"To be honest, I think the director thought I was BS-ing him. He didn't think I was going to follow through with it," Frampton said.

But Frampton was not BS-ing, and he wasted no time following through on his word. Four months later, Frampton went back to Koins for Kenya and threw down \$13,000, money he had raised by performing with his band and through direct donations.

"So, what's the next move?" Frampton asked.

"When do you want to go to Kenya?" the director replied.

## Off to Africa

In March 2010, Frampton hopped on a plane to Kenya with 10 others. He threw himself right into the mix, helping build multiple schools in various villages. From building desks to painting, Frampton helped in any way he could.

For much of his six-month stay, Frampton chose to live in the village with the natives of the land. It helped him fully adapt to his new environment and feel more connected with the villagers.

"I built my own house to live in. And my own outhouse," Frampton said. "It was basically just a hole ... kind of Tarzan-ish, which was pretty sweet. And I put palm leaves around it and roped it all together with local tree roots," he explained. He wrote about the experience in the *CrossFit Journal* (*It Makes a Village*, July 2012).

"In Kenya, I had to get used to a very basic diet. Corn is a staple. They made something out of it called *ugali*. Basically, they mash the crap out of corn until it turns into corn flour. Then they add water until it turns into a play dough," said Frampton, who ate *ugali* pretty much every day for six months.

He added: "Some days, there'd be a small fish for dinner, other days it was *ugali* with beans and local vegetables."



Mike Warkeatin

**Coach Greg Glassman, Frampton and CrossFit staff visited the CrossFit School in Dzendereni in May 2012.**

It took him a while to adjust, but after six months he felt fully immersed in the Kenyan lifestyle. It was coming home to Utah that ended up being an even tougher adjustment.

"It was surreal coming home the first time, to go from nomadic and native conditions to a place where everyone has everything," he said. "When I came back to Utah after half a year, I stayed in a fetal position for the first two weeks ... It just kind of sucked being home again."

Since then, Frampton has journeyed to Kenya five additional times, with another trip planned this fall. He says it's always an adjustment to get back into the rhythm of the land, both in the United States and in Kenya, but it's been well worth it.

### **The CrossFit School**

In February 2011, CrossFit founder and CEO Greg Glassman and a group of CrossFit personnel travelled to Park City, Utah, for a retreat. Joining them for the weekend getaway at a local ski resort was a group of CrossFitters eager to meet Coach Glassman.

Frampton and some others from his affiliate made the trek.

"That Saturday night, Glassman did a question-and-answer session," Frampton remembered. "I started talking to him, and I don't even remember how we got on the topic of Africa."

But somehow they did. And before he knew it, Frampton had told Glassman all about Kenya.

"I saw this spark in his eye," Frampton said of Glassman. "He seemed instantly compelled."

"We want to be involved in that. How do I get involved?" Glassman asked Frampton.

"Well, it costs \$10,000 to build a school. You can name the school whatever you want," Frampton told Glassman.

On the spot, Glassman pretty much said, "Sign me up," Frampton recalled.

Frampton wasn't sure what to make of it. Glassman was obviously inspired, but Frampton didn't know the magnitude of the inspiration.

"I thought at best he might follow through with sponsoring a school and maybe he'd want a couple pictures of it before moving on to something else," Frampton said.

Glassman and CrossFit did more than follow through and request a few pictures. CrossFit built a school, complete with desks and a rainwater-collection system. Glassman himself has visited the school several times, and he hired Frampton to take the Kenyan initiative to the global CrossFit community. Together with the Infant Swimming Resource, SAT prep and Hope projects, the effort in Kenya is one of four initiatives CrossFit is currently supporting in a big way.

"I never thought this project would become a branch of CrossFit that Glassman is so focused on and is putting huge resources into," he said.

Frampton added: "I mean it's really been unbelievable. To get an entire worldwide community that is stoked on it, that share a vision that we can roll out to thousands of people across the world, that's pretty cool."

### CrossFit School: One Year Later

The CrossFit School, located in Dzendereni, a small village outside of Mombasa, was built in the fall of 2011 and

opened in December 2011. Frampton joined a small team in December to put the finishing touches on the school before it opened to students.

To read more about the CrossFit School, check out Mike Warkentin's piece [Live and Learn](#).

The differences in the village since December 2011 have been vast.

"To say it has been a night and day difference wouldn't even do it justice," Frampton said. "Before the CrossFit School, kids were meeting in a room made of sticks and mud that had holes in it. How can you focus in school when things could fall on your head?" he asked.

Today, just 100 meters up the road from the old school is the CrossFit School, a stable concrete building, where kids have proper desks to sit in, where they have chalkboards to write on, and where they have clean water to drink. The school is bright and airy and clean. On top of this, attendance has jumped more than 50 percent, and children's grades have improved drastically.

"One girl in the eighth grade was even invited to a nationally ranked high school in Nairobi," Frampton said proudly. "It's because of CrossFit's contribution to this village."



Mike Warkentin

**Attendance increased more than 50 percent after kids started attending the CrossFit School.**



Mike Warkentin

***Coach Glassman poses with a tree he planted beside the CrossFit School in Dzendereni. Its growth will mirror that of the children in the village.***

That's a big deal in a country where you have to qualify to go beyond eighth grade. Failing to do so usually means a hard life in the fields, as well as a lowered life expectancy. Going to high school is one of the only ways to escape poverty.

Despite the progress in the first year, Frampton has bigger plans.

So far, the focus in the village has been getting clean drinking water and improving education, but soon they'll be able to shift the focus to luxuries like deadlifts and pull-ups.

"Right now we're doing minimal workouts with the kids. The plan is to slowly integrate CrossFit into their physical education program, but there are prerequisites that come before CrossFit, things like clean water and proper nutrition."

More than anything, Frampton wants other CrossFitters and affiliates to get on board and to help drive needed change.

"I want the CrossFit community to become even more involved in Kenya. I just want to see everyone grow together. I want to keep making connections over there, to create more success stories," he said.

### **Getting Involved**

Since the CrossFit School opened in Dzendereni last year, many American affiliates have responded by getting involved in the Kenya mission. Frampton explains that options for affiliates to raise funds are widespread.

Jeff Hughes of CrossFit Orange County was inspired by the CrossFit Kids for Africa Schools initiative and responded by holding a fundraiser this summer.

"We wanted to assist more than having a donation jar in the gym," Hughes said.



Mike Warkeentin

***Even small amounts of money can have a big impact on the future of young Kenyans.***

Hughes' efforts involved hosting CrossFit For Heroes, a competition that used firefighting techniques and equipment and was held at the Orange County Fire Authority in Irvine, Calif.

Steve Serrano of CrossFit Marina in Huntington Beach, Calif., is another who was inspired by efforts in Kenya.

"We were moved by the simplicity and virtue of the concept," Serrano said.

Serrano heard about Hughes' competition and held a similar event on the same day for his own members.

"We left fundraising options open so that our members will hopefully continue to literally give coins, which we all know can add up significantly over time," Serrano said.

Keeping options open for affiliates is part of the beauty of the Kenya initiative, explains Frampton. Affiliates are free to help in any way they see fit, donating as much or as little as they can toward the Kenya cause.

Hughes has taken advantage of this. On top of hosting his competition, he also held a casino night with a raffle to raise further funds. And his affiliate is currently selling T-shirts. The graphic on the back of the T says, "This shirt helped build a school in Kenya."

The point that Frampton wants to make clear to affiliates is that everyone's efforts, big or small, will go a long way to help kids in Kenya.

Serrano added: "This is really a movement for which every little bit counts."

A host of projects can be funded by the CrossFit community. School rooms, rainwater-collection systems and desks are some of the options, but CrossFitters can also help Kenyans improve their diets via chicken coops, small fish ponds, sustainable gardens filled with diverse produce, and more. The overall goal is to improve the lives of Africans by improving their health and giving them every chance to get a good education. No donation is too small, and even the smallest contributions can help the CrossFit efforts.

To get involved in the Kenya initiative, contact Dallin Frampton at [dallin@crossfit.com](mailto:dallin@crossfit.com)



#### **About the Author**

*Emily Beers finished a master's degree in journalism at the University of Western Ontario in the spring of 2009. Upon graduation, she worked as a sportswriter at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games, where she covered figure skating and short-track speed skating. Currently, she hosts **WOD HOG**, a not-always-PG publication of the CrossFit Vancouver School of Fitness. She ruptured her Achilles tendon in December 2010 and served as the Canada West Regional Media Director while recovering from surgery. Beers also competed in the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games on CrossFit Vancouver's team. She finished third at the 2012 Canada West Regional.*