When times got tough and she couldn't find work to pay rent, Elamina Mada would find her house door locked by the landlord, leaving her and her family without any shelter. To make matters worse, Elamina was very prone to getting typhoid fever. When the illness would take hold, she would endure the pain and sickness without taking any medicine. She avoided the doctor and sacrificed her health, worried that the extra costs would mean her family having to forgo food.

“Imagine not being able to go to the doctor when you are really sick. That was me when I used to get typhoid fever and I had no extra money to pay for medicine. It was an agonizing decision, but I had to put family first.”

She and other program participants began our one-year microenterprise development program in 2012. Elamina’s courage and spirit made her an exceptional business leader in her small, three-person business group. With two grants totaling 12,600 KES ($150) and the help from her Village Enterprise mentor, Eunice Chebet, her business group started buying and selling cereals at a small table at the local market.

Over time they used their profits to expand into selling fruits and vegetables and have added a covered kiosk for the new products. She has established a good reputation with farmers and they now come directly to “Mother Elamina” to tell her when their grains are ready for harvest. “I have learned about smart business practices, basic recordkeeping, and savings. All this training helps me run a successful business.”

Before entering Village Enterprise’s program, Elamina struggled to provide basic needs for her family. Now, her business has diversified and expanded, allowing her to pay for medication when she gets sick, all of her children’s school fees, three meals a day, new furniture, and a new home.

Elamina serves as an inspiration for the women in her village and for her first grandchild, Adimu, whom she can now afford to send to school.

“I am so grateful for Village Enterprise for opening my mind and for allowing me to provide a better life for my children and grandchildren.”