



VILLAGES OF HOPE AFRICA



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Directors of Village of Hope Malawi

April 2010

A heart-wrenching day

On Thursday, April 22, VOHM welcomed two precious girls, Helen and Agnes, into our care. This month, we share with you the story of their grandmother's difficult decision to give them the opportunity of a lifetime, and how God is giving us favour.

Wednesday, April 21 was a hectic day, beginning with a 45-minute search for our VOH keys. We finally left home without them, and soon got a call telling us they had been left on the landing outside the office building. Once at VOH, David repaired a fridge door in one of the VOH homes. Next was a lunch meeting, where Jr. shared with us that Rowena, the bookkeeper at VOH, was intimidated by us and had resigned, as she felt that she couldn't work with us. Rowena's last day will be May 13, which leaves us in a little bit of a jam, as year end is July 31. Connie is a little stressed about it, but I, David, have full confidence in her abilities and God's ability to fill in the gaps where she may be lacking. Jr. and David spent the rest of the day running errands for VOH, and stopped for a cappuccino at Cappuccinos. When we were about to leave, the people at the next table began speaking with us, asking what we were doing in Malawi. It turns out they were in town for the President's wedding – his new bride and Luba (Otto's wife) are friends. The Norwegian couple were quite taken with what we are doing at VOH and wanted to see VOHM. They had no vehicle, so Jr. offered to pick them up in the morning. That was the upbeat finish to a mostly downbeat day!



Agnes, Helen and their grandmother

Thursday started at 6 am with a Skype call from Lindy. She had been rear ended while heading to Brantford Hospital for a placement, but we are very thankful that she was not hurt and her car is fine. We then went off to the Andrews' home to deliver muffins for the ladies' Bible study. We got there just in time to have prayer with Jr. and Ivy. Next we went to the auditors, ran more errands, and returned to VOH to meet Otto and Luba, the couple Jr. and David had met at Cappuccinos the previous night. Jr. was already touring them through the facility when David arrived, so he just joined in. Otto and Luba showed keen interest in what is happening at VOH. We spent all morning with them, then Jr. returned them to their hotel. When Jr. was returning Luba and Otto to their hotel, Otto found out that he had a meeting mid afternoon, so Jr. asked Luba if she would like to come with us to an African village. Luba hesitated, and her husband quickly assured her that this was a great opportunity and that he trusted us to take her with us. She agreed to come.



Luba with some village children

The rest of the daylight hours were nothing short of amazing! Luba accompanied us as we were going to take custody of two orphaned sisters from a village about 10 km from our home. Off the pavement we went, onto the village roads (more like trails). It was slow going, but we got there! We passed through a few villages and many fields. There were mud huts with grass roofs (a few huts had steel roofs – they were occupied by more successful villagers), no running water, no electricity, no latrines of any sort. We arrived at Agogo Diane's hut and were quickly greeted by an aged grandmother who appeared worse for the wear. Through our interpreter and social worker, Jones, we were able to communicate with Agogo Diane. She welcomed us into her hut with smooth mud floors which consisted of four tiny rooms without lights, only one door, and two windows that were boarded up. The place was infested with fleas, lice, mice, and probably other things that we are better off not knowing about. This was her home, and she was proud of it!

Quickly and quietly, a rolled up bamboo mat was brought into the house so we could sit and visit with her. We discreetly asked if we could use the mat outside, and it was graciously moved outside under the tree. As soon as we sat, people came from EVERYWHERE! It turns out that this little village has a population of about a thousand, and the 10 km trail we took to get there was home to about 35,000. Agogo Diane could not write, but tearfully, through our interpreter, told us that she understood what she was doing – she loved her granddaughters so much that she was prepared to give them up so they could have a chance of a better life in VOH's care. She could not read or write, but 'signed' her approval with her right thumb print, and 'a mark' with a ball point pen, indicating that she was prepared to give little Agnes and Helen up, as she could no longer care for them. After praying with her and her other family members, we took some final family pictures that will be given to Agogo Diane another day. Jr. offered to send Jones back with cooking oil for Agogo Diane to help her feed the grandsons that she were remaining in her care. Tearfully, we parted.



'Signing' the custody papers with a thumbprint

As we were getting into our vehicles, Ivy asked about another one of the children in the village. There are countless children with distended stomachs who are obviously malnourished, but one in particular sounded like she had pneumonia. Through Jones, we determined that there was no medicine for this little one. Jr. took 1000MK out of his own money and instructed the mother to get the baby to a private clinic so that she could be given medication and a chance to live. Jr. communicated to the mother that this money was not for her or her husband, and that Jr. would follow up to make sure the baby received the care that was provided for. Luba silently cried through most of this.

Jones and David drove Agnes and Helen in the old truck to VOHM. They discussed an exciting opportunity to start a feeding program to help the malnourished village where the girls are from - if we can get the funds to operate this ministry, there is no telling how many little lives could be dramatically impacted! Luba went in the better truck with Jr, Ivy, and Connie. Jr. gave Luba the option of going back to her hotel or coming with us back to VOH to introduce Agnes and Helen to their new family and home. Luba decided to accompany us back to VOH to witness this.



Sisters, reunited at VOHM

Jr. and his passengers arrived at VOH first and assembled the rest of the VOHers to greet their new family members. When Jones and David arrived with the girls, the rest of the children, housemothers, and aunts were waiting to greet them and welcome them home. Agnes and Helen's younger sister, Mary, was already in VOH's care. Mary was downcast when she realized who the new kids were – she was frightened that Agnes and Helen had come to take her back to the village. It took a while to calm Mary down, but she did come around. Next, Mary was showing the girls their new home.

Imagine having never sat on a toilet and flushing it when you are done. Imagine washing your hands in a sink with running water and looking up to see yourself in a mirror. Imagine being shown a bed, and laying on it for the very first time. Tonight is the first night ever that these two sisters slept off the mud floor – in a bed, with a mosquito net! Today, these two little lives have been forever changed. No more aching, distended stomachs. They can SIT at a TABLE and EAT nourishing food that will help them grow healthily. They will start school on Monday, learn English, get an education, have their medical needs attended to, and best of all, learn about the love of Jesus.

This whole emotionally charged experience reminded me of our loving God. He gave up His Son, willingly, so that we would have eternal life. Agogo Diane did a similar thing. It obviously pained her to give up the sweet granddaughters in her care, so that they could have a better life. She wept, and is probably still weeping, but she understands that she has given them an opportunity for a new life. Her two grandsons disappeared immediately and are dealing with losing their sisters, thinking, "Why wasn't I taken?" The reason is, VOH does not have the finances to open another home to house them at this time. We so desperately need your continued prayers and support so that our ministry can grow to have an even greater impact in Malawi.

Luba, our Norwegian guest, stuck with us through the whole process. She is back with her husband Otto and they have told us that we will be hearing from them. Praise God!

Talk about a divine day. VOH isn't just about ministering to orphans, widows and abandoned children. There is a whole world out there that we have an opportunity to share God's love with because of what God has called us to do in Malawi. We just have to share our story about what God has us here to do; the rest is the Holy Spirit's job. Let's tell the story of God's love today!



L : Helen & Agnes with their new family, including Mother Beatrice



R: The sisters check out their first-ever bed, complete with mosquito net!

How you can help

We are looking for people who will partner with us in the ministry of Village of Hope Malawi. We cannot do it alone. It is God's ministry, not ours, and we need your help. There are a variety of ways you can help us:

Pray

This is the most important help you can give us! We truly believe that God is calling us to Malawi and if we are to accomplish His will there, we need His presence and His power. The country of Malawi & the children of VOH Malawi need your prayers. By partnering with us in prayer you are providing spiritual covering over us and our ministry.

Give

We believe that where God calls, He provides! And He works through people like our partners who help us meet our budget needs in Malawi. You can give in any one of the following ways:

→ Designate your offerings in your local PAOC church to Connie & David Buzikievich, PAOC missionaries to Malawi

→ Give online at <http://www.paoc.org/donate.aspx?mID=329>

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James 1:27 – Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress