

HANDS ON DECK

ISSUE FIFTY TWO



“She can have a testimony that says that God knows me and He rescued me” – Busie Sityatha-Jones

CHOOSING TO SEE GOD IN THE SUFFERING

Busie Sityatha-Jones, African Volunteer (South Africa) Regional Support Team (South Africa)

Towards the end of January, Busie travelled to Malawi to spend three weeks serving and walking alongside the Dedza Service Centre (SC). The primary purpose of her time in Malawi was to support the SC as they made plans to live out the commitments that were made at the October Gathering in 2017.

“I had the opportunity to stay with one of our Primary Caregivers, Rebekah, and her children, two of whom attend the Care Point. Both Rebekah and her ten-year-old daughter, Rose, struggle with serious health challenges that require them to take regular lifesaving medication. When I first visited the family, Rose was one of the children not attending the Care Point and as I sat with her, she asked why she wasn’t

also allowed to come. Just before I left Malawi, the SC team were able to make a plan and invite her to the Care Point that week. It was at this moment that my heart started to change. It is easy to be negative and ask God where He is in the suffering of His people. Yet as I walked away from the home, the prayer in my heart was to see God in the suffering and the pain. I believe through my community stay with this family, they realised that they are not forgotten, and that God knows them and remembers them. Throughout my time in Malawi, I tried to make this my attitude every day; seeing God in the midst of difficulties.

One of the questions that the SC team and I learnt to ask one another was ‘are our kids here being cared for well? And ‘if it was my children or family members would I act differently?’ That helped us to open our eyes on a home visit to see children like Rose.

I had the privilege of being a part of the first community prayer in the community of Maonde. It was

a beautiful time of fellowship and hearing from the word of God. On the day prior, I visited the home of a Primary Caregiver living with her three daughters. When the Care Workers first identified this family as one of the most vulnerable, they brought all three girls to the Care Point but at some point, the 12 year old daughter had stopped attending. While we were visiting the family, and found out more of their story, we learnt that she had been working for someone in a nearby town selling alcohol while her siblings came to the Care Point and went to school. The SC team explained to her mother that this was not right and challenged her to bring her daughter home. One of my highlights of the community prayer in Maonde was seeing this Primary Caregiver arrive with her daughter. After the time of prayer and worship, we had a chance to sit and talk with the family. Since then, the girl has started attending the Care Point again and is going to school. Through the love and commitment of the Care Workers, she can have a testimony that says that God knows me and He rescued me.”



CONTRIBUTORS

in this issue of Hands on Deck

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Jimmy Kerr
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Ruth Chembe
Kara McLaughlin
Melody Masuku
Stephen Matondo
Levy Mwenda

MY YEAR IN AFRICA

Jimmy Kerr, International Volunteer
(Australia), Communications Team

Jimmy was a member of the February 2017 Volunteer Intake and served on the Communications team in South Africa and the Regional Support Team (RST) in Zambia during his time with Hands at Work in Africa.

"It was my first time coming to Africa; I didn't know what I was jumping into or what Hands at Work was all about. Our orientation group quickly became a tightknit family and it was great to learn more about Hands at Work as a family. I had the privilege of spending a lot of time with Vusi, African Volunteer (South Africa) which was amazing. As he drives through the towns in Swaziland, he honks the car horn at people because everyone knows him! After a physically draining day, Vusi and I would go to bed at a late hour, sleeping on a wooden floor. But around 4am Vusi would be up and working on his computer. This man works incredibly hard for the most vulnerable, it's very challenging.

After orientation, I was placed with the communications team in South Africa. I was able to help collect stories and photos of the most vulnerable and then send it around the world. It helped me understand the responsibility there is to share information about the work happening in Africa. In September 2017, I was sent to Zambia to continue helping with the communications team and also to support the Kabwe Service Centre.

Throughout orientation, I was friends with Dawson Reddekopp (International Volunteer, Canada), and when we both ended up in Zambia we became even closer. It was encouraging to witness God's presence in our friendship; and that it was not random that we both came to Africa in 2017.

If I didn't come to Africa this year, I would've been instinctively chasing money and a safe and comfortable lifestyle. But I am super thankful to God that I came to Africa because my mind has been opened to a different perspective on the world, God's love and what Christians are called to do with our lives!"



Jimmy Kerr and the Kabwe Service Centre Team

MARANATHA WORKSHOP IN CHIBOTE COMMUNITY, ZAMBIA

Near the beginning of February there was a Maranatha Workshop held in the community of Chibote for the children and Primary Caregivers.

Eunice Kunda, African Volunteer
(Zambia), Kitwe Service Centre

"On the Tuesday of the workshop, we told the story of the Garden of Eden to the children who are 10 years and older; about the fall of man but the hope that we have in Christ. We told them about the power of the Holy Spirit working in us and talked about the healing that we need because of the brokenness that each one of us has. As a Service Centre team, we asked the children to share about the pain that they have experienced. One of the young boys, Robert*, talked about the pain that he felt after losing his father and how it hurt to see other children with their dads.

Once Robert started to open up, other children followed and as they shared, wept bitterly about their deep pain and brokenness. Many of the children shared about the particular pain that they felt from having parents who are still alive but choose not to live with them."

Ruth Chembe, African Volunteer
(Zambia), Kitwe Service Centre

"One of the grandmothers who came to the workshop was Quin. All of her children had passed away and left her solely responsible for caring for her grandchildren. The desperation that she faces is immense and she was considering taking her own life because of the burden that she carries. When George Snyman shared about the 'Jesus We Know' it spoke deeply into her life. She shared that the message had deeply touched her and filled her with hope because she realised that she is not alone."

As the Kitwe Service Centre continue to follow up with the children and Primary Caregivers in Chibote Community, ask God to give them wisdom and understanding as they help to bring healing into the lives of the most vulnerable. Pray for God to give them a continual heart of grace and compassion as they sit and listen to the stories of those who are broken and in desperate need of God's redemptive love.

ADVOCATING FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE

Kara McLaughlin, International Volunteer (Australia), Regional Support Team (South Africa)
Melody Masuku African Volunteer (South Africa), Regional Support Team (South Africa)

At the beginning of February, Kara and Melody accompanied Baba Vusi (African Volunteer, South Africa) to Swaziland. One priority of the trip was to understand the school situation that several of the children were facing.

Kara shares, "In Msengeni Community, there were 12 children who were being chased from school due to a lack of government ID documents. A part of what Vusi wanted to do was meet with the principal of the school to see if a solution could be found. When we met with Mama Thembi, the Msengeni Coordinator, we realised that she had previously gone to talk to the principal to plead for the children to attend school. By the time that we met with the principal, she had already been in touch with the Home Affairs office and arranged for the children to meet with the officials."

Melody says, "While we were there, we also went with Mama Thembi to the local police station where she asked for help with a situation where a 13-year-old boy was staying with his grandmother. He needed his papers to attend school but his mother was holding them and making it difficult for the family to get hold of them. Thankfully the police officers ensured that they would go and meet with the mother. It was great to see Mama Thembi use her voice as she fights and advocates on behalf of the most vulnerable children."

Kara shares, "On the last day, we went to do Holy Home Visits to follow up with the 12 children and see what documents they already had. When we arrived, we learnt that Mama Thembi and the team of Care Workers had already gathered the necessary information. It was great to see them owning the needs in their community and taking responsibility."

KABWE SERVICE CENTRE UPDATE

Stephen Matondo African Volunteer (Zambia), Kabwe Service Centre
Levy Mwenda, African Volunteer (Zambia), Regional Support Team



The Kabwe Service Centre is currently supporting six communities in the Kabwe region. There have been exciting things happening in the community of Susu which both Stephen and Levy had the opportunity to be a part of.

Stephen shares, "The water situation in the Kabwe area, particularly in Susu Community, is challenging. In Susu, there are only small streams of water

which people share with the animals. There was a borehole, which is used to source water, installed about eight years ago but it has not been working. Recently, Esther, a woman from Lusaka, the capital of Zambia, travelled to Susu to visit some of her family members. Esther was encouraged to see the community school doing so well, but it pained her to see children being asked to bring bottles of water to school with them, as the school had no access to clean water. Late in 2017, through conversations with the Community Based Organisation (CBO) and the Kabwe Service Centre, Esther managed to raise financial resources and support to repair the existing borehole and to drill a second one. From the borehole, the community also worked together with support from Esther's contacts to run taps to the school, the toilets and the feeding point. The second borehole is being used to water the garden and the orchard that the school have."

Levy shares, "It was encouraging to see the initiative that Esther took in helping the community. She saw the challenge of no water and made it personal. Esther can be a positive example for all of us. We need to look at the resources that we have and who we can reach out to in order to help address the challenges in the communities."

PRAYER POINTS

In February, Vivian Ijeoma (African Volunteer, Nigeria) spent two weeks in Zambia. Praise God for the way that He worked in her life during this time.

Praise God for the Care Workers in Swaziland who are taking the initiative in fighting for their children. Ask God to continue speaking into each one of their lives as they grow in understanding God's heart for justice and caring for the most vulnerable.

There are amazing things happening in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Praise God for the way that He is at work there. Pray for more Care Workers and Church Leaders in Goma to recognise their biblical calling to care for the most vulnerable. Ask God to protect people who face violence and oppression on a daily basis.

In the middle of February, the Luanshya Service Centre (SC) met with the Care Workers from the community of New Wells in Zambia to re-cast the vision of Hands at Work. Thankfully the response from the Care Workers was good. Please pray for there to be unity and love amongst the Care Workers. Ask God to give the SC and Regional Support Team wisdom and understanding as they support the Care Workers and the most vulnerable.

There has been rain in Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe but please continue to pray for rain which will enable the maize to grow strong to give people a good harvest and added food security.