

HANDS ON DECK

ISSUE SIXTY-FOUR



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MAKING IT PERSONAL

Sara Makwakwa, International Volunteer (US), Regional Support Team

In February, Sara had the opportunity to travel to Malawi to support the Dedza Service Centre. Her time there overlapped with Hands at Work Volunteers, Busie Sityata-Jones (African Volunteer, South Africa) and Catherine Clarkson (International Volunteer, UK). Two of the purposes of her time in Malawi were to encourage the Service Centre in their daily rhythms of meeting together and support them as they serve their communities.

“Last month, when Busie was sharing, she challenged us to think about what our communities will say about us. It doesn’t matter what ‘important people’ say about us but what ‘the least of these’ say about us. Jesus said, ‘I was hungry

and you fed me, I was a stranger and you invited me in.’ It’s what the hungry and the strangers say about us that counts.

“One day, we visited a boy named Simon* who Care Workers described as having bad behaviour. In our communities in Malawi, there is much fear of witchcraft. Based on Simon’s behaviour, the community thought Simon had evil spirits. During our visit, Simon’s grandmother asked Tanazio (a member of the Service Centre) if Simon could live with him. We were curious why she asked this. We found out that last year, Simon’s sister was also accused of having evil spirits. Tanazio and his wife, Chisomo, invited her to stay with their family. She stayed for five

weeks and came back changed. She was part of their family. She joined the family when they prayed and when they read the Bible. They talked to her about her behaviour and they loved her as their daughter.

“When a child is accused of having evil spirits, people in the community are afraid of them. This makes children like Simon so vulnerable. Can you imagine a whole community afraid of a little child? How does that make the child feel? People were shocked Tanazio welcomed Simon’s sister into his home especially because he has young children of his own. Yet Tanazio realised that weekly home visits wouldn’t be enough. He made it personal. It was an honour to hear what this family said about Tanazio and Chisomo. According to the world’s standards, what Tanazio did wasn’t anything special, but to ‘the least of these,’ he brought Christ to them and transformation into their lives.”

Ask God to give you eyes to see and ears to hear the needs of the most vulnerable around you, even when it comes at personal cost.



CONTRIBUTORS

in this issue of Hands on Deck

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GROWTH IN GERMANY

Markus Kalmbach, advocate and partner of Hands at Work in Africa



Markus is a long-time friend and advocate for Hands at Work and has been faithfully sharing about the work that is happening in Africa with people in Germany for many years. At the beginning of April, Markus brought a team from Germany to serve in Swaziland with Hands at Work. It has been encouraging to see the growth in Germany as people like Markus have committed to faithfully advocating on behalf of the most vulnerable.

“Imagine that you have a handful of seeds and you aren’t sure what they are. You put them in the ground, you water them and then something comes up, yet you’re still not sure what it is. In Germany, we put a little seed in the ground two years ago saying that we would support a community in Swaziland. We hoped that in 6 months, we would have 50 supporters, but we had 50 in six weeks. All the stories from Africa have been shared by word of mouth by people who loved the vision and wanted to support it. Today, we have 230 supporters. In March, we heard from our church council that the work with Hands at Work would be officially supported by the church, which is amazing. We are excited to see the way that God continues to grow things further.”

Today, we invite you to join us in praying for the growth of Hands at Work in Germany. Ask God to bring people alongside Markus and his group, as well as all our other partners in Germany, who understand the vision of Hands at Work and have a desire to speak as a voice for the voiceless.



Jess and her community stay family.



Jakob and his community stay family.

COMMUNITY STAY REFLECTIONS

In February, a group of new volunteers joined Hands at Work. As part of orientation, they did a community stay in Welperdiend Community, South Africa. This is always an impactful part of the orientation program – being able to stay with a family to understand life in a vulnerable community and to be a part of their everyday lives.

Jess Thomas, International Volunteer (UK)

“I had the opportunity to stay with a grandmother and her two grandchildren, along with another member of our 2019 volunteer intake. Initially when we met the family, they were closed off and when we asked about their challenges and if we could pray for anything specific, they said everything was fine.

“As the weekend progressed, we continued to build relationships and then on our last day, they opened up and told us that life wasn’t as easy as they previously said. Both of the children were abandoned as babies and there is no income in the house. While we were there, they had bought some doughnuts to share as a treat with us, but it was only on Monday that we were told that it was the last of their money that was spent on those doughnuts. It felt like the start of a real relationship, and it has deeply challenged me on how generously I am living.”

Jakob Moller, International Volunteer (Germany)

“Going into the community stay, I was really nervous, but at the same time excited. I stayed with a boy named Sibú* who is 18 years old and Brandon Wiebe (International Volunteer, Canada), a member of our intake. When we first arrived at Sibú’s home, we met his three older sisters and young cousins. We spent the first couple of hours playing games, but then it was time to have dinner and go to bed. The following day was laundry day, however, they didn’t really want my help, but eventually gave me two shirts to wash. For dinner, they served us a freshly killed chicken which I didn’t feel I deserved because the majority of the day I was playing with the children.

“I wasn’t sure that we really became part of the family, because a family is something that really cares deeply for one another and has a great trust, but we did start a relationship and I learned a lot from our time there. Through the community stay, I learned to appreciate the things that I have, like running water or an apple to eat. I feel thankful for my education and to have grown up with a father present which are things that we can’t take for granted.”

RELATIONSHIP GROUPS IN CHIBULI

Sylvia Mwelwa, African Volunteer (Zambia), Luanshya Service Centre

In 2017, the Luanshya Service Centre facilitated a Maranatha Workshop for the Primary Caregivers in the community of Chibuli, Zambia. The Service Centre wanted to start facilitating Relationship Groups immediately, but felt resistance in the community. Later in 2017, Sylvia and the rest of the Service Centre started to push for these groups to happen, and in early 2018, they had their first meeting.

“During our first Relationship Group, we could see the hunger in people. I could see that things like unforgiveness and witchcraft are huge strongholds in Chibuli. Yet, I found that as I shared my own story, God started using that to help the Primary Caregivers in Chibuli.

“Ruth* is a Primary Caregiver in Chibuli in Zambia who consistently comes to the Relationship Group and has even started bringing her mother. Sadly, Ruth’s husband passed away early in 2018. When Ruth started to open up, she shared that she had wanted to go see a traditional healer so that they could deal with whoever she believed had cursed her husband. As I spent time with her, I was able to hear her brokenness, pray with her and share the good news of Jesus. Ruth shared that my story had encouraged her and the fact that I could be so happy despite losing my parents and going through tough situations stood out to her. It is encouraging to see the way that God is healing Ruth from the pain and the brokenness that she felt.

“The word of God is a tool that we need to be actively using in our communities. We can bring food or clothing, but we need to be prepared to minister to people so that they aren’t returning back to their homes broken. I have seen so much growth amongst the Primary Caregivers and have seen many of them learn to forgive one another.”

WHO IS THE MOST VULNERABLE?

Tyler Ralph, International Volunteer (Canada), Regional Support Team

Towards the end of February, Tyler, for the first time, travelled to Nigeria to spend time visiting the communities and supporting the Lagos Service Centre.

“Precious* is one of the little girls that I met in Nigeria and she reminded me of the question that we ask, “who is the most vulnerable?”. The most vulnerable are not necessarily the children who are running to you but those who are hiding in the back. All of the other children kept their distance from Precious, which reminded me of who we are looking for. As I spent time with Precious, she opened up and I was able to see her real personality come through. It was very special and encouraging.

At the Eagles Wings Community School, I met teachers who were a deep encouragement to me. The classrooms were chaotic but I saw teachers who truly care for the children. I was humbled by their level of care. One day, along with the Service Centre, we visited Mary*, a young girl who had been burnt while cooking and now has open sores. She had received the necessary medication but what astonished me was how more people don’t get sick, especially considering the amount of rubbish around and the living conditions of the children and their families. It is tough for our Service Centre to have to deal with these situations every day.”



Tyler and teachers from the Eagles Wings Community School



Tyler and Precious



YOUTH CAMP AT KACHELE

Frank China, African Volunteer (Zambia), Kachele Team
 Ritha Mbuji, African Volunteer (Zambia), Luanshya Service Centre

In February, there was a camp held at Kachele Village for several of the youth from the communities of Chibuli, Maposa, Kalende, Kamakonde, Mwaiseni, Mulenga, and Zimba in Zambia. Throughout the week, the youth were taught about Jesus and the love that He has for each of them.

Frank shares, "Many of the youth came to the camp with questions about why they were in the situations that they were, and in fact, I had some of the same questions about my own life. Yet, my highlight from the week was hearing George Snyman share about Joseph in the Bible. Joseph was in a really tough situation and was even being persecuted by his own brothers. This story encouraged the youth to share their own stories.

"The youth were encouraged when Pragcidence Mwenda (African Volunteer, Zambia) shared her story. They were surprised to hear what she went through which helped them to open up. Several shared how they felt like they were alone in their situation until they heard that Prag had gone through similar things to them. Throughout the week, I had opportunities to interact with the youth which was great. It can be difficult to share the word with our youth and sometimes it doesn't mean much until we can connect it with our own stories. We need to pray for wisdom for those who are doing the camps so that we can know how to reach our children well."

Rita says, "We are trusting God that the seeds planted at this camp will grow well. It may be difficult to plan to spend time with the youth, but we need to push for this time with them. We don't want to lose our next generation."



PRAY IN THE WAKE OF CYCLONE IDAI

Pray for our Service Centres in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe to have wisdom and discernment as they respond to the needs of the most vulnerable in the wake of Cyclone Idai.

As the Service Centres in Mozambique and Malawi begin to repair homes and as they, and those supporting them, continue to assess and plan the next steps across the region, ask God to give them strength and endurance, and encouragement and love.