

HANDS ON DECK

ISSUE TEN



MY TIME IN ZIM AND MOZ

Leyton Wood, International Volunteer (AUS)
Regional Support Team
(Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe)

Leyton has served with Hands at Work since February 2013. He had the opportunity to stay in Zimbabwe in March where he fell in love with the country and its people. Returning in August, he also had the chance to go to Mozambique. He said it was challenging, a privilege, and like a true Australian, Leyton said it was “full on”.

ZIMBABWE

“It felt like coming home”, Leyton said of his time in Zimbabwe. On the other side of a 37 hour bus ride was Farai, whose family became a second family to Leyton when he visited Zim in March. Leyton knew the serious vulnerability of the Zimbabwean people, but this trip ingrained the reality of caring for the poorest of the poor much deeper than he could have imagined. Upon arriving, Farai gave Leyton tragic news. A young boy, Tawanda, whom Leyton connected with in March, had passed away three days before after suffering from HIV/

AIDS, TB, and chronic ear infections. Tawanda’s death was a stark reminder of the dire situations the children in Zim live in. While still dealing with the sadness of Tawanda’s death, Leyton had work to do supporting the Zimbabwe Service Centre as they prepared for a Maranatha Workshop with Care Workers in Pimai. Leyton felt privileged to be a part of the workshop and to witness the transformation that happened in the lives of many Care Workers. During the week he went on a home visit with Anna, a Care Worker, and John, Service Centre Field Coordinator. They visited Manyara, seven, and Piason Junior, four. Their mother passed away two years ago and they live with their father, Piason Senior, who spends a lot of time away looking for work. This leaves Manyara alone to walk each morning through the mountains to fetch water. She does all the washing, cooking, and cleaning. Leyton was struck by how serious she is and by how much rejection the family is facing from their community. Piason Senior said when he has tried to grow food in a garden people have stolen it. John told Piason his own story, of how his house recently burned down and how faithful God was during this crisis. Piason said he wished he could have strong faith. He brought out certificates showing he had become a pastor 10 years ago. He said when his wife passed away two years ago, he

lost faith and his connection to God. Piason was on the verge of tears as he said, “I have no Bible... I can’t do anything”. After spending 3.5 hours with Piason that day, Leyton, John and Anna returned to the workshop to share their experience. Anna admitted that she too used to look down on Piason and his family, and had contributed to the rejection they were feeling from the community. But after hearing Piason’s story and understanding his pain and why he has lost his faith, she said she had a new found compassion for the family. It can be hard to understand why the family’s own Care Worker would not understand them – why they would visit yet not have compassion. Through the workshop, Leyton understood how difficult life is for the Care Workers themselves, how they are often experiencing rejection too. As part of the workshop, Leyton stayed overnight with another Care Worker, Costina. She has a husband a three children and her husband has a second wife, Mavis. Leyton could see Mavis was treated as the ‘favourite’ wife and this had wounded Costina emotionally. Her self esteem was low and she lived as though she was always in second place and unloved. But on Friday, as the Care Workers shared their experiences throughout the workshop, Costina said she realised God cares for her. She said she never knew anyone loved or cared for her and, until now, she thought she was worthless. She said, “I’ve gone through a lot of suffering but now it feels like none of that matters. I feel so happy.”



CONTRIBUTORS

in this issue of Hands on Deck

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MOZAMBIQUE

During his time in Zimbabwe, Leyton also travelled to Mozambique with Farai and John. He was inspired by their leadership in Africa and thankful for all the time they spent together while travelling. Hands is hoping to begin 3 Essential Services in the community of Macadiera, and Leyton saw why this is needed so desperately. Macadiera is very isolated; the closest clinic and secondary school is 50km away. Health Care is nearly impossible and children do not go to high school. The men walked with Faustino, who is leading all our work in Mozambique, and Maria who is coordinating the work in Macadiera. "She is full of life and passion", Leyton said. She took them to visit a family whom she said is known in the community for having many funerals. At their home they met gogo Tracey who is living with one of her own children and 18 grandchildren. She once had 10 of her own children but over the years, 9 have passed away and she and her remaining daughter now care for all of their children who were left behind. They live in three mud huts: gogo Tracey and 7 children in one, her daughter and 6 children in another, and 5 children in the third. "They have rags for blankets," Leyton said. "If they get a gallon of maize, that food lasts them two meals. Gogo Tracey and her daughter look for piece work but it is never enough. The day I visited they said they had some food that morning but

dogs had come and eaten it." Only some of the children were going to school and three of them were sick. Manwell, 6, had a very infected ankle from being involved in a bicycle accident a long time ago. One day he needed a ride home and being so young, had no choice but to ride with a man who was drunk. Since the crash, he has been unable to get to the clinic as it is so far away. Isabelle, 13, had untreated boils under her arm that were getting worse. The youngest baby was severely malnourished and was drinking water from an old alcohol bottle. "It opens your eyes, it's really tough. It was so difficult to sit there with this family", Leyton said.

The next day Leyton, John, and Farai visited our second community in Mozambique, Matsino, a very new community. They spent the day with the 11 Care Workers as Farai led a devotion and spoke about the Hands at Work Core Values to the Care Workers and a local pastor. The Care Workers are so keen to get started on home visits that they had started doing them on their own – just showing up and visiting the people of their community in their homes. It was this kind of devotion to God and the most vulnerable children that inspired Leyton throughout his experience in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In situations that are often tragic, and crises that are overwhelming, he saw God healing both children and Care Workers from the inside out.

SMILES OF THE WEAKEST

Levy Mwenda

RST Leader, Regional Support Team (DRC, Malawi, Zambia)

Levy describes his time in the community of Kisunka, DRC and our challenge to go deeper in transforming the lives of the most vulnerable children:

In one zone of Kisunka, we have only 12 children attending a school because the room is so small. There are no desks and no boards. The Care Workers teach and feed these children each day at the tiny Care Point. There is love, faith and hope in this place.

This is who we are as Hands at Work. We don't wait for funds to build big things. We wait for God to bless us. When I look at this Care Point compared to the ones in Luanshya, I know that the same God can do a miracle here. We hope to find a bigger space, maybe a church, where we can have more children. When I entered the school, the kids and the Care Workers were full of joy - they were smiling! Why are the ones who are the most vulnerable and weak the ones who smile? Because those ones are God Himself. The local church needs to be taken here, to see the weakest and to see the most vulnerable being fed, singing, and doing their homework under a tree.

Erick knows all of these children by name. He challenged us by saying, "These children that we know by name, do they know Jesus?" I thought, how do we share the gospel to them? If they do not know Jesus, we are preparing them for a destiny that is not good. How will we feel when we are in heaven and the children are on the on the other side, calling at us?

Please pray for Hands at Work leaders to be able to walk with Care Workers in Kisunka and support them in a way that will help them bring the children they care for closer to Jesus. It is a bold desire we have to transform the lives of these children through the gospel, but we know that God will bring healing to them.

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OPERATIONS UPDATE

Marc Damour, International Volunteer (CAN)
Project Support Leader

As we talk about holy home visits, and waiting for God to show up, we can apply this in all areas of our work at Hands. If He becomes the centre of everything we do, each daily task, we will learn to wait on Him: being prayerful at all times.

Looking at each daily task, this applies to many of the current operational focuses. We are continuing to define our policies and procedures: Human Resource, Finance, and IT related. We are asking everyone to know the policies and procedures. Specifically for finances, to work together to plan ahead and communicate out early what they require for requesting funds. Policies can feel dry and not important, but they can be life giving for our community if approached correctly. We are trying to build a culture of accountability and stewardship and caring for one another. We are interconnected - what you do impacts the person next to you.

Looking at our work on the ground, there is also much to pray for. Maranatha Workshops are happening in Malawi. The Zambia RST will be attending and John and Farai are coming from Zimbabwe. This is a very special time as some of our key leaders learn and grow. Please pray for them to be united around a common vision and understanding of what God is doing.

Levy has recently had meetings in Kabwe with Shalom, Mapolo, and Makululu CBOs. The RST and Kabwe Service Centre has done evaluations to ensure our communities were truly among the poorest of the poor and shared our heart for the most vulnerable. After these evaluations, the decision was made



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for Shalom, Mapolo, and Makululu to graduate. We are very thankful that meetings with each CBO went well and are grateful for the other organisations that are working in these communities.

Looking forward, we need to all be praying for 2014. We are currently in a planning period around 3 Essential Services. Numbers are still being formalised but around 3,800 children will be supported by 3ES at the end of 2013, and just fewer than 5,000 will be supported by the end of 2014. This is a 30% increase – it's huge! There will be challenges and blessings that come with this push. We are growing in numbers but also in depth. Pray for the expansion in Swaziland and Zimbabwe. James is leading the work to define Church Mobilisation and how we implement it in our communities and throughout Africa. There are many big cities with churches in the countries we work in and we want to challenge them to support the vulnerable in their own countries. Church Mobilisation, Maranatha Workshops, and Relationship Groups (groups

where we facilitate Care Workers sharing their stories and challenges so they can find support and healing among one another) are all vital to our work and a huge undertaking to remain committed to. We are starting to build a framework for our work going forward. We are defining areas of focus for far into the future and we have the opportunity to shape them now. The work we do today and in the future is our response to what God is asking us to do, and it is our responsibility to do it prayerfully.