

HANDS ON DECK

ISSUE SIX



Hands at Work
AFRICA



“I realized she doesn’t do this work because she wants praise, she does it to glorify God”

SWAZILAND

Ashley Humphreys, International Volunteer (CAN)

Ten years ago George Snyman met Nomsa, a woman who felt called to care for the vulnerable children in Swaziland, living in her remote mountain community of Kaphunga Village. Today, ten years later, Nomsa is the Coordinator of Asondle Sive Bomake (“We Feed the Nation”) Community Based Organization (ASB CBO), which is caring for hundreds of children in the mountains of Swaziland. Ashley Humphreys, International Volunteer (CAN), travelled to Swaziland with Tyler Ralph (International Volunteer), Vusi Mabuza (Local Volunteer) and Wedzerai (Hands at Work Board Member). After meeting Nomsa, Ashley said, “Her name means ‘grace’, it’s so perfect. She is the most humble person. Multiple times I tried telling her how amazing she was and she just looked away. I realized she doesn’t do this work because she wants praise, she does it to glorify God.”

ASB CBO now has two feeding points: Mjweni where 50 children are fed, and on the opposite side of the mountain, Manyeveni where 25 are fed. Mjweni is also the home of a brand new Care Centre made possible through Hands at Work’s partnership with A Friend in Need from the US. Long time friends of Hands, Brenda and Heather from A Friend in Need recently visited Swaziland with their families to see the result of a project that was close their hearts since first visiting and meeting Nomsa in 2008. The Care Centre is now alive with children playing, and volunteers from the community working together to cook for them each day. At Manyeveni, there are only two Care Workers who live on that side of the mountain and yet they cook each day for 25 children who they know are in desperate need of a meal and the chance to see an adult who cares about them.

Ashley saw the way the Care Workers have come together across a vast area to care for the most vulnerable. “It’s only because of God that we even know these children are there”, said Ashley.

“It is so far, but there are dedicated Care Workers walking on the mountain to visit children in their homes.” She saw the dire situations that the children of Swaziland are in, but also the hope for their future when she met a young girl named Alina. Alina is eleven and cannot walk or talk. When Ashley went to visit her she was rolling in the dirt out in front of her home; this is how she moves. “She has the most beautiful spirit, she always smiles, she is trying to talk and you can see that there is so much hope for her”. This hope comes from the love Alina’s family has for her. Often, families in Africa do not know how to care for disabled children. But this family is saving up every last dollar to give Alina rehabilitation treatment. After only a few days, Ashley saw how the commitment of Tyler and Vusi to Swaziland, Nomsa, and the Care Workers has made ASB CBO a place where children’s lives are being transformed. “I watched Tyler and Vusi in the relationships they have built with Nomsa and the Care Workers, there is so much love and respect between everyone.” Ashley saw that the Hands family stretches far beyond what she thought. “I see now that there is a family in every single country Hands at Work works in – a family of people working together to take care of each other”.



CONTRIBUTORS

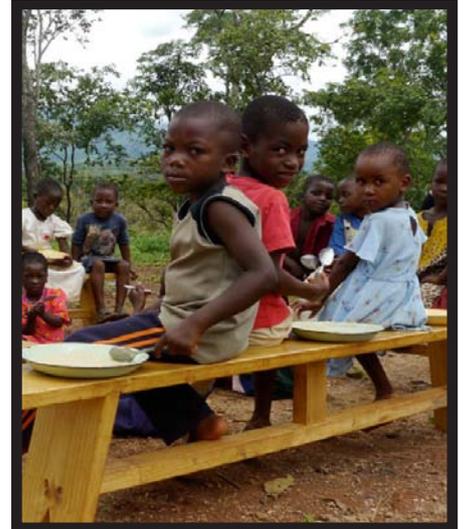
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Catherine Clarkson
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Sophie von Grundherr
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TIME IN ZIMBABWE

Daytona Swarbrick,
International Volunteer (CAN)



COMMUNICATING WITHOUT WORDS

Sophie von Grundherr,
International Volunteer (GER)

In her six months with Hands, Sophie had the opportunity to travel to four different African countries. Before returning to Germany she spent four weeks in Zambia where she experienced the power of communicating without words. She also witnessed an example of how the dreams of communities caring for the poorest of the poor are being richly realised.

I stayed with a Care Worker in K-Block who has ten children. She didn't speak English, not one word. I thought we would have no communication, but one night I was reading my bible, she saw me and looked so excited. She left and came back with her Bemba Bible. We sat there reading the same verses out loud to each other in our own languages. It was so special!

In Maposa I stayed with Merriam, a woman who has had three siblings pass away, leaving her with 6 of their children, 3 of her own, and her mother to care for. A total of 11 people live in her one room home. Barnabus, the youngest child, would not even look at me – he even cried when I just touched him. After the first night, however- when we all slept huddled in one room; I woke up with him snuggled next to me, in my arms. He looked as surprised as I was! Then all day he was with me, holding my hand. Josephine is a 19-year-old girl who also lives in the home and has a 2-year-old daughter. It hit me very hard

that I am 19 too. It made me think about my own life and how I am able to go back to Germany and go to school, but Josephine only finished Grade Nine because her family did not have enough money for her to continue. When you see little children you have hope for their future, but when you see someone your own age the reality of their situation hits you differently.

I visited the community of Racecourse where the Care Workers meet in a church every day. They also have a Community School and a small house that is used as a Care Point. The Care Workers were talking about their dreams for Racecourse – they said they want to have lots of land in the community with a proper school and a house where a Care Worker can live to look after the school and the garden that will grow maize and vegetables. I was overwhelmed hearing all this, looking at how little they have now. I thought, "this will never come true". Then the next day we visited Kamakonde where all the dreams of the Care Workers in Racecourse have come true! They have tons of land and they just built a school, a borehole, a house for a Care Worker, toilets, and they are growing maize and vegetables! It was amazing to see that their dreams have come true; to see what God has done in the 4 years they have had a partner. These things are not just on paper, they are not just things Care Workers say and dream about, it is actually happening. With time and support and love it is happening.

Daytona is often found behind the lens of a video or photo camera at the Hands Hub in South Africa where he serves on the Communications Team. But recently he found himself on the way to Zimbabwe when he was given the opportunity to help drive to a country he had never seen. "It was so cool to feel connected to the Hands family outside of the Hub and South Africa", Daytona said as he talked about meeting long time Zimbabwe family Farai, gogo Esther, and Priscilla. "I love it, I met some great people". It was the home visits that Daytona went on, however, that impacted him the most. In Sakubva he visited a family living in a seven-foot square room with no power. Susan, the mother, said her only hope for her family was for them to have food, clothes, education, blankets, and for her children to have shoes. "I got the feeling the kids did not go to school on a consistent basis", Daytona said. Susan's husband had been in a bus accident and was still in the hospital while Susan herself was sick. Daytona saw the hope that the amazing Care Workers of Zimbabwe brought to families like Susan's, but the level of poverty struck him deeply. "Doing those home visits was very hard. I can't do a lot of them – it breaks me a little bit each time. I can't do too many before I'm an emotional mess". Daytona met a boy named Davidson who came up to him 20 minutes after they first met and asked, "Do you remember me?" In that moment, Daytona realized the importance of knowing each child by name. "The fact that I knew Davidson's name was huge for him. We can go into a community and snap a photo that captures the emotion, but when you know their name that makes all the difference".

BACK TO NIGERIA

Tommy Malster, International
Volunteer (UK),
Project Accountant



On his most recent trip to Nigeria, Tommy saw hope when he visited a community that is not even officially connected to Hands at Work. Near the community of Elekuru where Care Workers are currently caring for 150 children at the local CBO, is the community of Lashidi. Tommy visited Lashidi with Peter, Nigeria Service Centre Coordinator. Members of the local church here recently realized that children had to walk two hours to get to the nearest school, or they were not going to school at all. In a great feat of local community ownership, volunteers have built a local school of sticks and leaves where 20 children are currently attending school. The community has counted closer to 100 children who could attend if there was room and resources. The school has one teacher who is walking 2 hours each day to and from school to teach the children. In support of the way the community of Lashidi is trying to care for their children, the Care Workers of Elekuru have been bringing food from their CBO to the new school to feed the 20 children in school.

Sadly, the community of Badia has a story of devastation. Badia is often described as the closest place to hell anyone could imagine. Tommy emphasized this after again seeing the brothels lining the street: "It's indescribable". But much worse than brothels was seeing a vast area where the government has come into Badia with bulldozers and cleared occupied housing. "Some people have managed to find other houses, but the government doesn't offer temporary housing. They just clear it out and don't care where people go. Imagine the desperation of the people watching bulldozers come in and clear their houses".



STORIES OF PARTNERSHIP

Catherine Clarkson, International
Volunteer (UK),
Partner Communications

ZIMBABWE

In Toronto, Canada, People's Church has stepped up to take responsibility for 100 children at Pimai Community Based Organization in Honde Valley, Zimbabwe. Paul Chong from People's Church came to Africa last year with his family and returned home with a passion to advocate for the children he met. This has led People's Church to commit to a partnership with Hands at Work for three years. Recently, Paul returned to Africa to visit Zimbabwe in preparation for the upcoming team coming from People's Church. Paul says, "Once you come to Africa and see for yourself, you'll be changed."

MALAWI

Hands at Work US has connected with an organization called Dress a Girl around the World. Thanks to this partnership, every girl in the community of Mcheneke will receive a new dress. For most of these girls, they only had one set of clothing to wear each day and almost none of them owned a dress. A recent team from the USA asked what they could bring to Malawi. After communicating with Hands at Work, they held a soap drive and brought over 400 bars of soap to children and Care Workers in Malawi and Swaziland. Hands at Work often has the opportunity to provide donations to the children in our communities. In keeping with our vision to provide what is essential and of

priority need, we work very closely with the Regional Support Teams (RST) and Service Centres to ensure our children are receiving items that are a blessing and are useful.

SOUTH AFRICA

500 children throughout South Africa were blessed last Christmas with a gift that had their own name on it. Rob Gibbs, Director of Mopani Pharmacy, and his wife Lanese have been long term friends of Hands. They also play a strategic role for Hands at Work in their own church, Church Unlimited, who are one of our dedicated partners. During the Christmas season, Mopani Pharmacies had Christmas trees in their stores where customers could select the name of a vulnerable child, chosen by Hands at Work, whom they could pledge R100 towards. At Christmas time, Mopani sponsored any remaining children whose names had not already been selected. In January, international and local volunteers went out into our South African communities to distribute the gifts. Simon Mgwanya, from the South Africa RST, assisted with the delivery and said, "The kids were so happy to receive these gifts because they had their names on them. If you go back to the communities now you still hear the grandmothers speaking about the gifts and the impact they had on the kids". Hands at Work is so blessed to have partners like Rob and Lanese who are extremely generous and are always asking how they can help with our work. Please continue to pray for our partners across the world and the work they partner with us in.



A FAMILY IN THE DR CONGO

Jackie Okindah,
Care Worker Support

Mama Ilunga is a 33-year-old single mother of two girls, Mary, 8 years old and Sarah, 20 months old. Jackie met Mama Ilunga after hearing a tragic story from CBO Coordinator and Care Worker Mama Gilen from Kisunka Community Based Organisation.

Mama Ilunga was met by the Care Workers of Kisunka one day in the community surrounded by a crowd of curious onlookers after she had a seizure due to an epileptic attack. When the Care Workers from Kisunka CBO came to the scene and followed Mama Ilunga to her home – a little shack - they met her two extremely vulnerable children, Mary and Sarah, who were suffering from a lack of care due to their mother's regular (4 times a day) epileptic attacks. Kisunka CBO immediately adopted Mary and Sarah into their care and the girls began having access to one hot nutritious meal a day. Mary seemed to be a cheerful little girl but had deep set sadness in her eyes. She would come daily to the Care Point to eat her own food, and to carry some food home for her little sister Sarah.

One day Mary came to the Care Point limping and in pain. Immediately Mama Gilen noticed and asked her what had happened and she said her foot and hip hurt. Mama Gilen put some ointment on, massaged her and packed some food for her little sister Sarah and Mary went home. But the pain Mary had did not cease and she later confessed that she had fallen from a swing on a tree. Mama Gilen then opted to take her to the local clinic where the nurse gave her some painkillers and recommended that Mary be taken to the hospital. Mary's pain only got worse and she began to cough out blood as she arrived at the hospital. Mary needed a blood donation and everything was done

to save her life but it was too late - she didn't make it. Mary died on Friday 22nd, 2013 in the hospital in Likasi of a hemorrhage.

As Levi and Jackie listened to Mary's story during a meeting with Service Centre and CBO Coordinators in Likasi Service Centre, there was a great heaviness and brokenness in their hearts. They felt a burden to pray for our children who die so young. So the next day after listening to the sad story of this family, the Service Centre team, Mama Gilen, Levi and Jackie decided to go visit Mama Ilunga and Sarah in their home. At this time it was only a week after Mary's passing and they wanted to offer their heartfelt condolences.

On arrival, they found Mama Ilunga looking like a small child herself, and Sarah in their dark little shack without a door or anything inside. As they sat with her, they saw that Sarah did not look good at all. She was too small for her age and she could not walk let alone stand. She had been suffering from diarrhea for several days, and was completely dehydrated with no energy. Jackie and her team realized that if they did not act immediately, Mama Ilunga was going to lose her only surviving child. They took Sarah to the local clinic and the doctor confirmed that Sarah needed help and a healthy regular feeding program to survive.

The Service Centre Team and Care workers ensured that something was urgently put in place to facilitate saving the little girls' life. They also realized that Mama Ilunga needed to be helped and surrounded with people who would constantly care for her and ensure she takes her medication for the epilepsy in order for her to heal and help her little girl Sarah. Please keep this family in your prayers.

FEBRUARY 2013 INTAKE

International Volunteer (CAN)



In February, the most recent intake of International Volunteers arrived at the Hub in South Africa. From four different countries, these new family members have come to serve God and the vulnerable children of Africa.

During their orientation, they stayed in pairs in the community of Welwerdiend with vulnerable children and families. This experience helps them to truly understand the brokenness that our children live with every day and it helps them to develop a deeper understanding of the work Hands at Work is striving to do.

Joe and Leyton stayed with a teenage boy named Prince. Watching the way Prince interacted with the other boys on his football team, and the friendships that had developed is what impacted Joe the most. He saw how Prince and his friends were similar to his group of friends who were back home in the UK, and was struck by how these boys who are the most vulnerable in their community were still just regular teenagers. Joe got to know Prince's family – which was so large and complicated that he had to get Prince to draw out a family tree so he and Leyton could understand! Joe said it was a true blessing to spend three nights with such a welcoming family. "We became such a part of their lives in a short time... more than just visitors. It was like we were old childhood friends".

Alicia and Mariah stayed with a family of nine and witnessed, as Alicia said, "a closeness I've never experienced". She saw how the family she stayed with and the entire community was committed to caring for one another. Everywhere she looked she saw women and children coming together to care for one another. The young girls in the family played with Alicia and Mariah's hair and one of Alicia's main highlights was teaching the oldest sister's son, Distance to smile.

Alicia connected with the head of the household, an 18 year old boy named Mandla. "He's an amazing young man", Alicia said. "Considering his father left his family after his mother died, his family are refugees from Mozambique, and he is living in one of the poorest communities in Africa... He is still so motivated. He wants to be a social worker and help his own community. He's very mature with a broad perspective on the world... so different from me when I was 18. He has an encyclopaedia for the letter S – only the one volume that he found in the trash covered in paint. He knows everything about the letter S." Alicia could clearly see how God is working through Mandla and the younger generation in Africa to stop the cycle of hopelessness and poverty. "It gave me hope, to see someone fighting for his future and that of his community"