

HANDS ON DECK

ISSUE FIVE



Hands at Work
A F R I C A



“So many of the orphans are disorientated. They don’t even know what day it is.”

STRETCHING OURSELVES: OSHOEK

Sibusiso Mamba and Dan Waspe,
International Volunteer (UK)
South Africa Regional Support
Team

In 2009, George stood overlooking a community called Oshoek with a friend who said, “It’s the worst community I’ve ever seen and I want you to take this burden”. George had many reasons to say no but he heard God speaking through his friend. Then he met a local principal who said, “So many of the orphans are disorientated. They don’t even know what day it is”. George returned home to tell Hands leaders, “We have to stretch ourselves and go to Oshoek”.

Since that day, Hands at Work has been building a relationship with Bambanani Home Based Care (BHBC) and supporting them in caring for the vast area of Oshoek on

the border between South Africa and Swaziland. The 23 Care Workers of BHBC walk huge distances to visit over 200 of the most vulnerable children across a 20km area.

On November 1, 2012, BHBC began providing 3 Essential Services for 50 children in the specific border area of Oshoek. This first day was a celebration, bringing together the chief, pastors, community leaders and the principal of the local school. Pastor Malaza, a local pastor who has been an advocate for BHBC and Hands at Work, spoke at the celebration and challenged more people to partner with the Care Workers of BHBC. Recognizing that on weekends the children are actually more vulnerable, BHBC made the brave decision to cook and provide care 7 days a week. The community is demonstrating true ownership in caring for their vulnerable children. A local government crèche (pre-school) is providing the use of their

premises as a Care and Feeding Point, and also allowing BHBC to have space for storage, cooking, and use of their water.

God has already begun transforming the lives of the most vulnerable children in this community that was called “the worst”. On the day the Care Point opened, ses Fortunate, Clau Clau Service Centre Coordinator, met a seven year old boy named Mancoba. He did not want to play. “He was shy, hunched over, and exhausted. He looked like an old man”. Two weeks later, she saw Mancoba again and he was a changed boy. “He is now a 7 year old boy, his whole face has changed! He was smiling and laughing and playing. It makes me so happy – it shows the care and feeding is working”. We want Care Points to be places of life where kids like Mancoba are known by name. Please pray Oshoek will continue to be a community where God transforms the lives of the most vulnerable children.



CONTRIBUTORS

in this issue of Hands on Deck

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OUR FIRST VISION TRIP

George Snyman, Founder and CEO
of Hands at Work in Africa



“God offers us amazing opportunities in our lifetime and there are so many practical things we can do in this life of mission if we are obedient” – Robyn Hunziker

BUILDING HANDS

Robyn Hunziker,
International Volunteer (AU),
Hands at Work Elder

Robyn and Sal Hunziker were volunteering with Hands at Work before it was officially Hands at Work. In 2002 they came to serve full time and have since built gardens, toilets, Care Centres, homes, and even Hands Village in White River, South Africa. They have also built up teams, local volunteers, and relationships with the most vulnerable children, many of whom call them mother and father today. After more than ten years, they are not looking back, but forward to their next project: Kachele Village in Zambia.

Kachele Village has a vision: to be a place where we can create a holistic, transformational community. Turning Kachele into a home for local and international volunteers is a project Robyn has put all of her heart into, alongside her skill for home-making & renovation. “I was a hairdresser for 40 years. I remember when Hands Village was just bush and mambas. God gave it to us so it was our responsibly to build and look after it. Every single thing we have was brought to us from the Lord, just like Kachele. God offers us

amazing opportunities in our lifetime and there are so many practical things we can do in this life of mission if we are obedient.”

At the end of 2012, Robyn spent time working with a dedicated team of volunteers to continue building Kachele Farm. “We were willing to be creative and willing to try”, Robyn said. God sent volunteer tradesmen from Australia to Zambia who worked with Sal to replace decrepit plumbing. Other changes included making curtains, hanging light shades, painting, restoring a kitchen, new thatching, window shades, fly wire, and hot water in the chalets. Regarding the least popular job of all, emptying the septic tank, Robyn says, “It was Joy! Amazing! In May 2012 the whole system was blocked. Now it works! And later this year there will be a new one. Kachele’s septic is now working healthily ... it’s a huge benefit to the volunteers who stay there. It’s making a house a home.”

Robyn and Sal will spend most of 2013 working with a team to continue building up Kachele. They hold tight to God’s promise for Hands at Work that we “do not need to look for the people or the resources to serve the most vulnerable”, He will send them to us. And when He does, we are ready and willing to build and care for what He has provided.

“We have been talking about it for a long time, and this year we stepped out and did it”. George, Lynn, and Levy recently led the first ever Vision Trip for International Church Leaders. George said the time with senior leaders from Grace Church in the USA and People’s Church in Canada was a huge success. With a goal of deeply casting the Hands Vision, the group headed to Malawi for a week of intense time in the community. Our visitors met key Hands at Work leaders and grew to understand who we are and what we do. George was so proud of Royie, Malawi Service Centre Coordinator, for the work that he is leading and how he prepared for the Vision Trip. The experience of a Senior Pastor from Grace Church confirmed that the trip had reached our goal for these leaders to catch the Hands Vision in just a week. Joel, a pastor in his mid-30s, has been in ministry his whole life. He has seen many leadership interactions and roles, but said he had never seen leadership operate in the way our leaders work together at Hands. He said he has no doubt that God is doing something in our midst and that our model, philosophy and platform is the best way for others to come, serve, and support the transformation of vulnerable children’s lives. George said we can all be encouraged by Joel’s experience as we sometimes miss what God is doing when we are right in the middle of it. This Vision Trip is only the first of many that we pray will be a catalyst to involve many International Church Leaders in the future.



ZIMBABWE

Chris Macleod,
International Volunteer (AUS)

"I will be your God throughout your lifetime--until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you." Chris has seen, and says, "God has Pimai and Sakubva in His hands. He's really caring for them". Isaiah 46:4

Chris Macleod spent five weeks in Zimbabwe, staying with Farai Ngunhe, Service Centre Coordinator, and his family. He spent time at Sakubva Community Based Organization (CBO), where 50 of the most vulnerable children are being cared for and are receiving a meal five times a week. "It's an urban area – there are kids everywhere. Walking around and doing home visits was really fun. You get a reputation in the community quickly. At first all the kids were pointing at me and saying 'muzungu!' So I learned how to say 'Where is the muzungu?' in Shona. Eventually they were all chasing me shouting 'Crissssss Crissssss'."

Chris also visited Pimai CBO in Honde Valley. Started by Farai in 2008, Care Workers are now feeding 100 children five times a week. Chris was awed by the landscape of Honde Valley. "It's paradise. Mango trees, waterfalls, it's stunning." Chris met gogo Esther who has been an inspiration to many at Hands at Work. "She lives next door to Pimai CBO. The kids are in her home all the

time... she is so beautiful." Chris was privileged to be a part of a community celebration at the CBO where the Chief and his grandson attended. "The chief's grandson was very interested in what we are doing. It really showed me how much the community stands together." Also in Honde Valley, Chris stayed with Betseral. Betseral lives with his cousins and his gogo in a spare room at a Care Worker's house. His parents have passed away and he is HIV positive. Chris was inspired by Betseral, saying, "He is so strong and intelligent. He wants to be a teacher in Mutare".

Chris found a verse very significant to his time in Zimbabwe that reminded him of everyone from the kids, to Betseral, to gogo Esther. Isaiah 46:4 says, "I will be your God throughout your lifetime--until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you." Chris has seen, and says, "God has Pimai and Sakubva in His hands. He's really caring for them".

SOUTH AFRICA CARE WORKER SUPPORT

Emily Dinhira, Care Worker Support
Christa Roby, Int'l Volunteer (CAN),
Care Worker Support - Project Support
Jo-Anne Snyman, International
Volunteer (SA), Hospitality/HR support

Since August 2012, the Care Worker Support Team has focused on mentoring Care Workers in the foundation of Hands at Work: relationships. The team has realized it is not enough to go into a place, facilitate a workshop, and then leave. Emily and her team, including Jackie Okindah, have been meeting with Care Workers once a week in the South African communities of Share and Siyathuthuka. During this time the team has built relationships with the Care Workers and begun a process that allows them to be aware of their own inner wounds. This process facilitates and allows for healing and relationships through organized activities and home visits to Care Workers themselves. The impact was not just on the Care Workers - the team emerged from this experience transformed themselves. "It is one of the most amazing experiences of my own life", Emily said.

Through building a relationship with the Care Workers, God revealed to Jo-Anne that she was not just there to support them. "I saw how God allowed them to share their stories with one another. They even came to me and prayed for me and the healing I have experienced in my own life. Together, we're getting somewhere. God has brought us this far and I am excited to see more".

After weeks of sessions with the team, Christa heard the story of one Care Worker's childhood abuse. She was told her whole life to hide her story, but said she has learned that this trauma is no longer hers to bear. Christa said, "Now she knows that she doesn't have to hide or feel guilty and she feels empowered to help other vulnerable children so they will never feel how she felt."

The transformation of relationships went beyond the building where the team and Care Workers would meet. In Siyathuthuka, a local pastor came to speak to the Care Workers to encourage them, starting a deeper relationship with the community. In Share, Care Workers began giving home visits to each other when someone was sick or a family member passed away. We pray God will continue to be ever present in this work as the Care Worker Support Team works to transform the lives of Care Workers so they can go out and transform the lives of vulnerable children throughout Africa.

ADVOCATING FOR AFRICA

Catherine Clarkson,
International Volunteer (UK),
Partner Communications



The Neville Family

Holly and Jo Neville visited South Africa with a team from the UK in October 2012 and visited the communities of Belfast and Somerset. As they met the most vulnerable children and walked with Care Workers, they were deeply impacted by what they saw and what they felt. Now back in the UK, Holly and Jo have been a voice in their church and community for Africa. They have been wrestling with what to do, knowing God brought them to Africa and back for a reason. As they kept wondering, 'what's next?', they found this being echoed right at home with their own husband and father, Chris. As Chris heard their stories, he too felt ownership of caring for the vulnerable children in Africa. Now, as a family, they have committed to be voices for the children they met, to financially support vulnerable children through the Hands at Work office in the UK and for Chris to explore a possible trip out to Africa so he can see for himself what impacted Jo and Holly so deeply. This family is an example of what happens when we do not limit God, but allow him to radically change us and our lives.

One by One

Partners like the Neville's help us continue to reach out to the most vulnerable children of Africa. One by one, our mission is to know their names. Catherine knows the impact that comes from international visitors and teams. "These visitors, like the Neville family, will be impacted. They will go back to their own countries and talk about the people they meet in our communities. Be encouraged by those who God is calling to advocate for the children."



Annie, Mckeneke Malawie

FOUR WEEKS IN MALAWI

George & Marj Miller
(International Volunteers, CAN) and
Sophie von Grundherr (GER)

George, Marj and Sophie spent November 2012 in Malawi where they stayed in three Hands at Work communities and experienced, as George said, "a time full of emotions from the very high to the very low". In Maonde they were amazed by Care Workers who are caring for vulnerable children in the community out of their own personal resources. Though they are living in poverty themselves, these Care Workers are providing for and feeding 20 children porridge each day in an old chicken coup. In this area there are over 1000 orphans and the HIV rate is over 58%. Marj was encouraged by the community of Mngwere where she and George had visited last year. "You can see the kids improving. They are healthier, happier. We pray for Maonde to be like Mngwere one day". The team worked with Royie and the Malawi Service Centre where they saw the dedication of volunteers who George says are, "identifying the holes in the wall and trying to fix them".

On a home visit in Mcheneke, they

met 15 year old Annie. Annie is a double orphan who contracted a debilitating illness at age 2 and now struggles to walk and has limited use of her left arm. Sophie was impacted by this girl's story. "Her grandma said she was a burden and moved across the street. Now Annie lives all by herself in a one room hut. She can't go to school, or get water or wood, but she has a Care Worker who visits her every day. She brings her food and love. The saddest thing about Annie was that her dreams were not like the other children we met. She said she just wants to have a blanket and food for the day. She will probably never have an education. But I could see how much the Care Worker meant to her." The team struggled with what they witnessed on many of the home visits as they saw leaking homes with no doors and no locks, children living alone and unprotected. Sophie said, "You can't do anything, but you know why you are there – to love them and hear their story".



THIS IS WHAT WE DO

Marc Damour, International
Volunteer (CAN), Project Support
Leader

He guides the humble in
what is right and teaches
them his way

– Psalm 25:9

Usually based at the Hub in South Africa, Marc spent half of 2012 in Zambia. A major highlight during this time was travelling with his church from Canada, Westside King's, to DR Congo for the first time. After failing to cross the border in 2011, the team from Westside finally got to see and understand what they are a part of in one of the most devastated countries in the world.

Marc also returned to South Africa with reflections on the growth of community at Kachele Farm in Luanshya:

With so much changing in the Zambia RST, I'm still trying to wrap my head around it. My highlight was getting to spend so much time in this growing community. For a few years, the story of Kachele has been one of a lot of people coming in and out. Now life is really being breathed into the farm. Being there over team season was particularly special this year. For many teams who have come to Kachele many times, this year, in addition to continuing to invest in their relationship with the community that they are partnered with, they got to be a part of the Hands community on the farm: seeing how we live our lives together as a family through that they many found a deeper understanding of the calling that we are trying to be true to.

Marc spent a lot of his time in Zambia in the office and with Levy and James working on structure



changes at the RST that are necessary to support its growth. In the midst of operational changes, Marc told of how he was reminded again of the importance of the principle of 'we are before we do':

The development of the RST is all still evolving. It's not a fully painted picture, but something is being created and we're excited. None of us are experts in what we are working in but that can actually be good: we don't need to feel intimidated by each other; instead, in our weaknesses and strength, we are forced to walk together, supporting one another. I was most encouraged in Zambia by the collective desire for genuine unity, and we must keep this if we are going to be successful in our mission. We need to carry the burden of the person walking beside us, even if we are the two most different people. It's not easy. It takes slow and patient steps with one another. I would like nothing

better than after all these months to come back and say 'look what I built and how smooth everything is running!'- but that's not the nature of the work that we are a part of. It's work that calls us to faithful obedience. Throughout my time in Zambia I was encouraged by Psalm 25 and would encourage us all to meditate on the path that God has called us to.