



His Hands for East Africa

Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2022

Our first visit in 4 years!



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Daniela-EA15294
Age 5



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Daniel-EA15293
Age 7



Lea-EA15298
Age 7

Four team members made a visit to our partners in East Africa in August. We were so happy to finally be able to visit again after a forced hiatus of FOUR years due to political instability in the region as well as the pandemic. Veteran team member, (and former program coordinator) Marilee Colpitts, joined forces with me in leading our two "newbie" team members - Sharon Gates and Sherry Grunder. We found our partners in good spirits and doing well. We were able to spend time both with Pastor Jean and his wife in Rwanda as well as Pastor Bamo and his wife in Uganda. Sadly, we were unable - yet again - to visit the children in Congo. Rwankuba is literally a war zone at this time after the rebels took over the border crossing in Bunagana, The



Our 4-person team

government has troops positioned near the road that goes into Rwankuba, but the rebels still control the area from that point up to the border of Uganda. It would have been impossible for us to get into the country and make the journey out there safely. We were able to get information sent to us from trusted friends of Bamo's and we even had the opportunity to do a video chat with one of the students. We spent a total of 8 days visit-

ing Pastor Jean and Pastor Bamo and then we traveled to northern Uganda to visit another ministry which has become a new partnership! (See page two!)



Pastor Jean interviewing



Pastor Bamo with Kabale students

Congolese refugees in Uganda

One of the most heartbreaking things we experienced during our visit was meeting sixteen Congolese refugee children. They fled from the war in Congo - sometimes with only the clothes on their backs - to reach safety across the border in Uganda. Some of these children were separated from their parents while fleeing, and now all of them are living in refugee camps and squatter's camps in Kisoro as well as in the area close to the

border. Their hope is for the hostilities to die down enough for them to return to Congo but only time will tell. In the meantime, we have made it our goal to find sponsors for each and every one of these precious children. If they are unable to return to Congo before the start of the new school year in January, the sponsorship funds will be used to help meet their physical needs while they wait to be able to return

home. I have included photos of most of the children in this newsletter and I hope you will help us find sponsors for all of them.



Refugee camp in Kisoro which currently houses 20,000 people

A New Partnership begins!



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Mahoro-EA15301
Age 8



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Heshima-EA15286
Age 8

Just after we returned to the US after our previous visit to East Africa, we were contacted by friends in the US who had been supporting a pastor in Uganda. They asked if we would be willing to partner with this pastor to help him provide help to the children in his church. We said we would be happy to consider it BUT it would have to wait until we made our next visit to Uganda - never anticipating it would take FOUR years before we would be able to visit again! But Pastor Jonathan Gumisiriza was patient and understanding and waited those four, long years for us to come meet him and see the children who needed help. It was such a blessing for us to meet him and his lovely wife, Lilian, and their three, sweet children - Patience, Evan, and Hannah. We spent several days with them learning about their ministry, Tender Mercy Ministry, as well as the needs in their very-rural community, and then spent one day documenting 30 children for the start of this new sponsorship program in Kyegegwa district. They have been serving there since 2016 and have started a school that currently provides classes for 85 children in the

preschool levels of Baby and Top, along with PI in primary school. They hope to be able to continue adding more primary grade levels as God enables them to do so.



Tender Mercy School

They also have a church that currently has 150 people in attendance. We were blessed to experience some beautiful worship time with them in special meetings they planned during our stay.



Tender Mercy Church

**Pastor Jonathan, Lilian,
their children, and other
family members**



Trip reflections of Sharon Gates

My trip to East Africa was amazing! Even though many are struggling, the men, women and children are so friendly and so full of praise for the Lord. The Rwandans, Ugandans and the Congolese are such beautiful people and my life is changed meeting and knowing them I can't wait to go back, God willing.



left - Sharon playing with some children in Kisoro, Uganda

Right - The team at Pastor Bamo's home with some of the Congolese refugee children, their mothers, and their pastor



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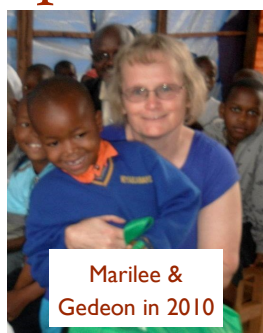
Desanges-EA15285
Age 9



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Ichimpaye-EA15302
Age 9

Trip reflections of Marilee Colpitts



Marilee & Gedeon in 2010



Marilee & Gedeon in 2022

Relationships have been a vital part of HHSM. It was wonderful to be back with our friends in Rwanda and Uganda. We are truly brothers and sisters in Christ and it is such a joy to spend time with them again, and have so many laughs as well as share in the needs of the people. I have been blessed with multiple trips to our East Africa program since 2010. I met the "little boy" we sponsor in Rwanda in 2010 and have had much fun over the years reuniting with him. Gedeon is a pastor's son in Rwanda and has grown into a young man who loves the Lord. I was so surprised to see how much he had grown in the 5 years since I'd last seen him. We always have made silly faces on my camera and this time was no exception.

Meeting the new people in the new program of Pastor George's church was inspiring. Though they have so little, they praise the Lord joyfully in worship. Seeing the "Bethlehem" school building and their excitement over what the Lord is doing there was humbling to me. The Lord can take such faith and turn their dreams into a reality. Lastly, meeting the Congolese refugees was heartbreaking. "Lord, break our hearts for what breaks yours." One of the highlights of the trip for me was being able to cuddle and rock one little refugee girl for quite a while. No words needed to be spoken....just touch and love! And alas, another sponsored child is added to our family.

Trip reflections of Sherry Grunder



Uwamahoro-EA15289
Age 9



Nsibimana-EA15287
Age 10

By the time most people reach my age, their adventures are past. God's plan for me was different.. At the age of 58 God whirled me into an amazing adventure of firsts; My first mission trip, my first passport, my first time to leave the North American continent, my first real introduction to another culture - the culture of East Africa.

Though I had never been on a mission trip, I have long been a supporter of missions both financially and with prayer. So, in a sense, I was prepared for what we would see and experience. I knew the food and bathrooms would be different. (They were!). I knew there would be abject poverty such I had never seen before. (There was.) I had been warned I would want to help everyone I saw (I did!) I was told folks would see me - the rich white person - and ask for money. (Some totally did.) I was sure the people would be hospitable - sometimes even to their own hurt. (They were WONDERFULLY welcoming and hospitable!). I was aware that our partners might ask us to teach in the churches and pray with the poor. (2 sermons, 2 Sunday school classes, 1 radio broadcast, and more prayers than I can count!). So, as you can see, I was ready. I was prepared, both spiritually and practically.

But, there was one thing I was NOT prepared for; the hearts of our partners. Again and again I was brought to tears and conviction by their words and actions.

(Rwanda) The way Pastor John and our driver, Godwin, took care of us and went out of their way to make sure we were safe and comfortable.

(Uganda) Pastor Bamuleke's love for God and

his care and compassion for the churches he oversees and the children he enrolls in the program. His concern for the children and families in the Congolese refugee camp really moved my heart. Pastor Jonathan and Lilian had us in their home for four days. Their graciousness to us and provision for us was amazing. And their continual dedication to the Lord so challenged me. They have devotions with their entire family every morning at 5:30 am and every evening before bed. Their time together includes worshiping, sharing the word, working on memory verses and praying. We participated with them in the evenings - and the worship was so real and so sweet. Oh, how I loved hearing them praying and singing every morning. This sleepy American couldn't coherently participate with them that early, but I would listen and pray quietly in my bed. Additionally, they REALLY care about their church members and community. They were always available to their people and looking for viable ways to help. I'm SO glad we were able to add their church's children to the program!

Because of our partners in Africa, I want to press much closer to the heart of God. I want to KNOW His Word, live it and share it freely and frequently. I want to have my eyes and ears open to the needs of others in the church and in the community. I want to love like they love!

I hope to go to Africa again, but that is in God's hands. Even if I don't, I pray God will use me more fully where He has placed me. It's all for HIS glory!



My trip reflections

As Marilee already mentioned in her reflections, a large part of the purpose of His Hands Support Ministries is to build and strengthen relationships with our partners around the world. This year marks the 15th anniversary of our first visit to meet Pastor Stephen Bamuleke and Pastor Jean Rudasumbwa in Uganda and Rwanda. As I reflect back on all that God has done and the experiences He's allowed us to have in these 15 years, I am in awe to see the ways He has moved and how lives have been touched because He allows us to be a part of His plan in Uganda and Rwanda. We have seen children come into the program and then leave again in a few short years. But we have also been blessed to see children come into the program as little ones who are now grown and almost ready to complete their education because of the support of their sponsors. One of my favorite examples of this is Jonah and her daughter, Celina. Jonah entered the sponsorship program back when it first began as a single mother trying to finish her secondary education. She was put into the program and quickly sponsored, enabling her to complete her education. She now works as a nursery school teacher.



Celina & Jonah

When Celina was old enough to attend school, she was also put into the program and was quickly sponsored. She is now in S4 and hopes to become a nutritionist.

During our time in Kabale, we discovered two of the sponsored students in the program have become best friends - Celina and Lynet. Lynet has also been in the program since she was a young child. It was such a joy for us to learn that one of Celina's favorite things to do in her free time is to tell stories with Lynet!



Lynet & Celina

Our focus on relationships doesn't only involve our partners and the children in the program, but it also extends to those we meet along the way. On this visit, we were blessed to be able to spend time with our "favorite" driver, Godwin, who has been hired to drive us on previous trips. His joyful spirit, along with his efforts to make us as comfortable and safe as possible, are humbling and we are thankful to be able to share the love of Christ with him through our relationship with him.



Godwin

We also started two new relationships during this trip. I have already written about our new partnership with Pastor Jonathan, but we also added another new partner, Pastor George Nkurikiyimana, of Natete Pentecostal Assembly of God Church, and his wife, Aidah. Pastor George has a church of over 200 people in the small settlement of Natete on the outskirts of Kisoro in Uganda. He is a friend of Pastor Bamo who asked us to visit Pastor George's church and enroll children from his church and his small school, Bethlehem Pre & Primary School, in the sponsorship program. The school currently has about 50 students and 5 teachers for three preschool grades (baby, middle, and top) as well as P1 and P2. They hope to be able to



Hekima-EA15297
Age 11



Niyibizi-EA15290
Age 12

My trip reflections (cont'd from p. 5)

add new grades each year as the students progress, but their primitive building will need to be enlarged and improved.



Iradukunda-EA15288
Age 12



Pastor George & our team



Bethlehem School



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Honest-EA15296
Age 17



Our team with Pastor George's family and Pastor Bamo

All in all, we documented a total of 187 children in Rwanda, Uganda, and Congo combined. While that number might sound impressive, what is equally important to us is the time we spent building and strengthening our relationships in East Africa. The value of these relationships is not something quantifiable, like counting the number of children we document. But, to us, these relationships have a value you can't quantify, a value of such significance that you could never put a number on it. As I sit here at my desk writing this, having just experienced a visit from Hurricane Ian here at my home in Florida, I am thinking about our brothers and sisters in East Africa who were praying for us while we rode out the storm. And I

am thinking about them and praying for them as they go through the difficulties they are experiencing, such as the Ebola outbreak happening now in Pastor Jonathan's area, or the harrowing journey Pastor Bamo's wife, Siriaka, made to visit her family in Goma after the recent death of her uncle. In all these instances, we have reached out to one another and have sought prayer for one another and you can't put a value on that.

So will you join us in praying for our brothers and sisters in East Africa? And will you join us in searching for sponsors for these dear children who simply need someone to reach out and help them as they try to achieve their dreams?

- Jamie Charles, His Hands for East Africa Program Coordinator



with our sponsored child, Carine, in Kigali



Sweet faces...



...of East Africa

