



Nicolas

Steve Vinton, March 27, 2007

He had the look about him when he stepped out of the line of the actors taking their bows and his voice boomed with the same confidence he had during the skit. My name is Nicolas, and in the skit I played the roll of the doctor, a slight pause because that really was all I think he was supposed to say, and then he added, and when I finish high school I'm going to go to the university and I'm going to be a doctor.

Nicolas is from the village of Ihoa, he finished primary school in 2004, and like hundreds of other kids in these villages, he waited for months after he finished his exams only to get the news that he had not been chosen to be sent away to the government school. He, like all of the 292 kids at the assembly today at Idigima Secondary School, was told that there was no room for him and that he would never get to go to school.

I have no clue what Nicolas did every day of 2005 and 2006, but I do know that every day for the last two months Nicolas has been there with at school in his work clothes hauling bricks, carrying sand, planting flowers, working hard with all the rest of those kids. But today Nicolas was wearing a brand new school uniform, he got to shake hands with each of the ten teachers we had brought to open the school, he listened to the songs and the speeches, and Nicolas got to play his role as the doctor in the skit that the students put on for those opening-day ceremonies. Their skit was

hardly subtle -- it was the tale of two sisters, both who studied hard, both who wanted to go to high school. One sister passed first in her class, got chosen to go far away to the government school, didn't see her parents for years, got tricked by a boy into believing he loved her, got AIDS and returned home to her village to die. The other sister passed but didn't get chosen to go to the government school, waited for years at home dutifully helping her parents out at the house, the got to come to Idigima Secondary School (like I said, real subtle these kids!), continued to stay at home with her mother and her very strict father, and eventually graduated and headed off to the university. Nicolas was the doctor in the skit who tested the little school girl and broke the news to her that she was HIV positive.

I told those kids and their parents today of my dream that one day ever child in every single village in Tanzania would at least get the chance to go to school. I said you know there are some people who think I'm crazy, that we'll never be able to find enough teachers to teach in that many schools. Well, to their cheers, I told them we have 292 students right here on this opening day at Idigima Secondary School and every single one of them has the huge potential of one day being a teacher in a school that Village Schools Tanzania will start. Every single of them. Except for one. Nicolas. He's going to be a doctor.