



The lifting of the fog
Steve Vinton, February 26, 2007

Her first grade teacher says that Magda is one of the brightest little girls in the class.

She's eager, she's bright, she's got a great smile, she wants so much to be in class.

And she's totally deaf.

And we all know here what that means for Magda. It goes without saying what the future looks like for a little girl who is deaf in a village here in the middle of Tanzania.

Susan told me about Magda the day before Godfrey and Emmanueli and I set off on our trip to visit the teachers and students at the new school we just opened last month down in the south of the country. Perhaps in our travels we could make some inquiries somewhere and see if there might be a school for the deaf somewhere where Susan could send this little girl off to get an education ...

And so off we go on our trip. Lofty goals. We're supposed to meet with a commission of government officials organized by the governor of the region of Ruvuma to identify new areas where we can open schools. We're supposed to meet with villages leaders in the Ruvuma region and hold town meetings and get the ball rolling on opening a new school there. We're supposed to visit our new school in Maguu, work with the teachers, meet with the parents and the building committee. And, yup, we're supposed to find out if somewhere there might be a school for the deaf that would take in a little girl named Magda!

Fast forward a couple of days later, I'm walking out of the office of a man named Jacky who has intervened to help us in a rather disastrous

situation that we found ourselves in. We had some awfully serious troubles, here we were in the middle of no where we didn't know a soul, and Jacky "saves the day". And we owed him a lot more than simple thanks and a handshake. And so Godfrey and Emmanueli and I were there in his office to try to express just really how thankful we were for all that he had done for us -- total strangers -- people he had never met. And yet he helped us. Clearly one of the wealthiest men in that town of Njombe, his phone calls opened doors, he knew everyone, and he had just come back from a trip to the neighboring country of Kenya to get lab equipment for schools. We shook hands and we were being ushered out the door -- just one more thing I found myself saying -- Mr Jacky there's this little girl in our village who my wife insists is tremendously bright and she's deaf, you wouldn't happen to know of somewhere, anywhere, in your travels where there might be a school for the deaf where we could send her? He smiled. Right here in Njombe Mr Vinton is the finest school, a wonderful mission school, run by a very fine group of nuns, let me give them a call ...

This isn't any old school for the deaf. It's a real primary school where the kids learn and get a real education, and soon it just might have one more very bright little girl getting an education there ...

I wrote all of this a couple of weeks ago. Life has been so hectic, and I've been feeling very much like I've been running through life these past weeks in a fog from one near disaster, crisis or problem to another, and today I looked through my draft box and found what I had written about Magda. Pie in the sky of course these things my wife asks me to look out

for! A school for a little deaf girl. When I'm trying to figure out how to get classrooms built, I have trucks that are broken down, we're preparing to hire some 40 new teachers this next month, I've got school inspectors breathing down my neck, the statistics start rolling in that more than a third of our kids are orphans and don't have a nickel to their names and will never be able to pay a thing, and the

boat is sinking under the weight of paying all of their teachers -- and just when I think I can't breath anymore I very luckily have Susan's "needles in the haystack" -- her urgent desire to see a little girl in the village who is deaf get the chance to go to school -- and God brings me back to the real reality of life, when I'm so deaf I can hardly hear His voice.