



We've got a problem.
Steve Vinton, May 14, 2007

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For the past nine months we've been struggling with the system to get our schools in Tanzania registered and accredited. As many of you know we finally succeeded a month or so ago with two of those schools -- Madisi and Kising'a -- but we seem to have run into a brick wall with getting our school at Sawala registered and accredited.

Normally I wouldn't care much about this and I wouldn't bother you all with our headaches. But we're getting very close to the deadline for registering students for the national examinations. And if we can't get Sawala registered and accredited by the June 30th deadline it means that 138 kids are going to have to travel to the city to take their national exams.

These kids are poor, they're just getting by as it is, and uprooting them from the village, having them all have to scramble to find places to sleep in the city, making them figure out how to eat in a place where food is expensive, and having to do this for the whole 8 days of the exam period is not only certainly going to be an incredible hardship for them, we know without a doubt that it will very dramatically affect their scores on the exams and a lot of them might not even have the means to show up. And according to the laws of the land any kid who fails those exams is simply not permitted to continue on with their studies and there's nothing that we can legally do to help them. To get this far after all of the work that the parents have done to carry the stones and make the bricks and build that school and then to be thwarted by this is really just, well, crushing. It grieves me, it has grieved me, and it'll continue

to grieve me. It's one of those problems that is always in the back of my mind and never goes away.

I'm writing you all because I just got word from Godfrey that inspectors are coming again this Thursday to review our progress at the school since the last inspection. To tell the honest truth, no school can possibly meet the letter of the law, and no schools in fact do. The school at Sawala is in fine shape compared to schools all over the country and certainly merits on that basis getting registered and accredited. But for some reason that we can't figure out one of the inspectors in the office has repeatedly, at inspection after inspection (we've had five now), blocked the approval. There seems to be not an ounce of grace in the woman, not a bit of pity, not even a little tiny bit of understanding and willingness to bend. And so in spite of all of the work they've done in the last month, we have the feeling that that before her it will be useless and she will just raise the bar again. Each time she tells us what we need to do it to get approved, we do it, she comes, says ok you did that but it's not enough and then adds new requirements to her list and we play the game all over again. It's maddening.

With all the big things that there are to pray about -- the really important things like praying for all the widows and the orphans we're working with and asking God to meet their needs day after day, praying for open doors for us to get into more villages, praying for our need for teachers and for God to send more workers -- somehow praying for the heart of one little inspector to somehow be softened seems well maybe a little less of a priority. Some how we need for her to have finally a

little pity and show a little grace so that these kids can be spared what will certainly be not just a horrible ordeal but something that will unnecessarily and unfairly affect their lives in a huge way. And so, well, here I am frustrated and I guess I just want to ask you all if this week if you might concentrate on praying for something to happen in her heart. We just need something finally to go well in this process.

The inspectors are coming on Thursday. I leave America on Wednesday, I'll be in London on Thursday and I'll arrive in Dar on Friday. Godfrey sent me word that I should just hop on

the bus and come across the country alone because he and Emmanuelli obviously won't be able to come down to receive me. Instead they've decided that once the physical inspection of the school is over they're going to hop in the car and go to Mbeya to the head office and they are resolved to simply not leave until they try finally to get a favorable ruling.

It might not seem like a big thing in the grand scheme of life. But to the 138 kids at Sawala who have to take the exams this year, this is an incredibly huge thing to them. And it just seems so unjust and so unfair and so unreasonable.