



Many children will tell their story surely different from mine.  
Steve Vinton, July 1, 2007

This morning I woke up not even really because I wanted to but because it was already 7am and even though we didn't make it to Songea and find a place to sleep until 2am, we still had a very long ways to travel today. I was tired and I have to admit that I woke up in not exactly the best of moods. I found myself feeling quite ashamed of that, because so many incredibly wonderful things have happened this week that I rebuked myself for having the attitude of a spoiled little brat. Life is so wonderful, we are so blessed, so many wonderful things even in the last few days, and I wake up focusing on a few petty things of no consequence. My thoughts drifted as I was beginning my day back to an airline attendant I remember probably 20 years ago who was wearing the button that said "Too Blessed to Be Stressed" and so feeling rather foolish I opened up my computer to check my emails here. Only one. How unusual. (I normally have 30 or so). It was entitled "A word of gratitude" and it came from someone here in Tanzania. Let me copy and paste it for you all to read:

"By chance I just wrote the word "Maguu" in Google with the intention of knowing if there is anything of interest going on in Maguu, my home village. What a wonder to read the story of "A priest, a grandfather, and an agricultural extension officer ..."! Last year, in June 2006, I visited the foundations of Lukima Secondary School, I then felt a sense of admiration coming out of me "wow, here is the miracle in making". I was so impressed to see such an initiative happening in my own village. I finished primary school in 1981. Our class had two streams A and B, each with about 40 pupils. At the end of standard seven (1981), one boy and two girls were selected to join government secondary schools. Then I remember four of us (boys), through the initiatives of our parents and friends, managed to get out of Maguu and found a place where we could follow an afternoon programme of secondary education for adults, annexed to a certain secondary school. Several times I travelled on foot Maguu-Kigonsera. The programme was intended to boost up the level of education of primary school teachers who had not done secondary school. There you are, I joined the programme when I was 14 years old and I had classmates, some of them, aged between 25 and 30. Why do I tell this story? I am overwhelmed by your courage to reach that part of Tanzania, in spite of its bad roads, remoteness and many other obstacles, the impossibility has become possible. During my holiday, I met a good number of my primary school classmates, most of them, are now fathers and mothers; they were so enthusiastic to build Lukima and they said "Let our kids have what we missed". I see the love of God through your work. Keep it up. Indeed, it is because of this love that you visited Maguu and realised what now we proudly call "LUKIMA SECONDARY SCHOOL". I pray that may God bless all those who generously contributed to its realization. From your website I read "Mikalanga is under construction", again I extend my congratulations and recognition for such unflinching Christian sharing of God's love. You have laid a solid foundation, many children will tell their story surely different from mine. Congratulations. This letter conveys my personal expression of gladness and gratitude."

And so I sat there this morning at my bedside, good and chastised and just let the tears stream down my face.

On Tuesday we visited for the first time the village of Ulolela where we were invited to come see all of the bricks that people had made for their school, on Wednesday we were in Mikalanga on our second visit to that village to

see the progress they were making on building their school, and on Thursday we made our first visit to the village of Mpepo where we held another town meeting and saw the beginnings of the birth of that school – and I know that although it will require an incredible amount of hard work on the part of thousands of people and an incredible amount of money from a lot of generous people – there is the very real

possibility that three new schools could open up down here in the south of Tanzania by January and perhaps as many as six hundred more kids could get the chance to go to school as a result.

We had word that Godfrey succeeded with the inspectors in getting the signature for Sawala that we've been agonizing over for the past months.

We got word that Sarah's trip to Uganda has potentially opened up wonderful doors for us to launch VSI in that country.

I got to relish the present and the past, seeing again a glimpse of my grandfather.

And instead of waking up joyful, all I could focus on was that I was so tired, that the goats that we had been given as gifts were making a horrendous smelly mess of our car, that we had wasted two and a half hours waiting for a silly signature from a government official in the middle of the night and that as a result we not only didn't find a place to sleep in Mbinga we didn't get to Songea until 1am and then we spent well over an hour until we finally found probably the last guest house in the whole town that wasn't filled up – and when Emmanueli

showed me the room I knew why. I've never slept with so many obnoxiously noisy mosquitoes in all my life, there was no water to bathe with and we had forgotten to eat dinner.

Verses like “give thanks in all things” can cause a person to rebuke themselves – they did! --, the memory of a cheery helpful stewardess and her button proclaiming that she was “Too blessed to be stressed” can turn rebuke into a grudging smile – it did! --, and an email from someone you don't know can cause you to be inspired to keep on keeping on and in fact to do more and more.

That man who wrote me saw only the foundations in June 2006. I just had to write him this morning to tell him that when I was at the school on Wednesday there were 381 students studying at Lukima Secondary school! All were kids who were told either this or last year or the year before when they finished primary school that there simply was no room for them and that they would never get to go to school. 381 kids.

And I had to tell him that we're committed to working towards that day when every kid in every village no matter how remote its location, at the very least gets the chance to go to school.