



No way we can explain away what has happened  
Steve Vinton, October 15, 2007

We are blessed to have so many people write us after they receive our emails. Some of what people write encourages us, sometimes it causes us to think a lot with really challenging ideas, often we simply rejoice to hear how some of the things that interest us and apply to our lives here in Africa have parallels in the lives of our friends that they challenge us by sharing with us. Occasionally some people write us letters which are simply gems. Allow us to share with you a letter we received from a Tanzanian friend who is studying in Europe right now. If reading his email is half as much a blessing to you as it is to us, then we will have done good by sharing it on to you ...

Dear Susan, I read your "Attending their children's graduation" with lots of interest and satisfaction. From the letter, immediately I feel strong presence of "hundredfold of hope" or if you wish "double joy": first, the parents who experience and discover from their innerself a possibility of seeing another day in spite of illness. This is simply because someone has shown them love and has witnessed to them the universal values of humanity, of course from Christian point of view. Second, the parents see their children graduating, most probably something they never thought of. When one is having children and s/he is in a situation of dying, you can imagine what a confusion enters into mind! A total darkness! Yes, it is the darkness of no hope that kills more people than the disease itself. When light of love comes in, a room for new courage, new life, new hope is experienced. It is in fact like separating darkness from light, and God saw "it was good". Seeing their children graduating is an exciting experience, I would not get surprised if some of the parents, deep in their hearts, prayed now Lord, you may let your servant go in peace as you promised; for my eyes have seen the salvation...of these kids. Susan, for some people it is easy to preach God is love and Jesus said love one another, in reality it is too hard to put love in practice. It is hard because to love is to suffer and only few are ready to suffer. Susan, you see friends (kids and parents affected with HIV/AIDS) dying in your presence, you go to take part in their funerals, it is a process of deep suffering, a process of loving up to the end. "Jesus is the Lord", the words of a friend pronounced on his deathbed. Indeed, he has touched Christ through Susan's love and presence. To feel powerless before a hopeless situation is not always a sign of defeat, for me is a sign of self-sacrifice, a total giving to the point of feeling left with nothing, the only hope is to acclaim Father into your hearts I surrender my beloved ones. Courage and keep on loving, the only way of witnessing Christ ...

Keep on loving, the only way of witnessing Christ. My mind stuck right here. Our friend had written so many good things and I knew there was more coming in the rest of the letter, but it was there at that sentence that I had to stop and let it all soak in. Keep on loving, the only way of witnessing Christ! My mind wandered to the words of St. Francis of Assisi! Preach the Gospel always. Use words when necessary. The words of Paul! We love you so much, so much that we were delighted to share with you the gospel ...

We call Quinbert our friend, and he is! -- and yet we have never seen his face, we've have yet to share a meal together, we don't know the sound of his voice or what it is like to laugh together. And yet our bond in Christ is such that Susan and I look forward with great anticipation to the day when we will receive him in our home, when he will speak words to our students, when we will share ever so briefly the privilege of being together. And then perhaps, because our friend Quinbert comes from the village of Maguu way down in the south of the country where we have opened a school, God will grant us a gracious favor of allowing us to return together to his village to see that school together and to share in the joy of seeing what God has done. You see it is because Quinbert, while doing a google search of

his home village of Maguu, bumped into our website that we now write to each other frequently, sharing insights with each other from the Scriptures, and I never come away from reading one of his emails without feeling that one of the side benefits I've personally received from working with our team here to start schools is that my wife and I have become friends with this man.

I had wanted to share with you all the letter that he wrote to me a couple of weeks ago but time got away from me and I never got around to sending it. Enjoy it as well my friends and be blessed as you read it ... it's almost as good as the letter he wrote to Susan! I never come away from reading one of his emails without feeling that one of the side benefits I've personally received from working with our team to get the school started in Maguu is that I have made a friend who blesses me every time he writes. Enjoy!

Subject: RE: The best underdog story I've ever lived

Dear Steve, Good evening. It is exciting when I read your letters; they are a real witness arising from the grassroots. Tamara's letter and your own comments have made me re-live my own experience. The A-students, yes we had them in my own class. Out of 75, only one boy and 2 girls were lucky to be selected to join secondary school. What about the 72? Our famous song was "Darasa la saba LY x2 LYx2 1981 tunafungua mashamba ya kahawa". [Translation: Seventh grade LY LY LY LY 1981 we are going to work in the coffee fields.] LY stands for Last Year. That was THE LY, no hope of further progress. I remember to have said during my home-leave 2006, some of my primary school classmates were happy with Lukima because their kids will have a chance to study. The other day my Dad was in Mbinga town, I had him on phone while conversing with him, I asked "Has Lukima started?" Excitingly he answered "What a blessing from God! People are gladly rejoicing". From him, I could sense a genuine joy abit like what the disciples of Emmaus experienced: "Are not our hearts burning within us when Jesus opened our eyes to experience the fulfilment of scripture"? Yes, Steve from the grassroots and hills of Mafinga, Mbinga, etc., your team guides the flocks so that they may have life and have it to the full. God's blessings. Greetings to Susan and Tamara.

In the village of Maguu – and in all of the villages around Maguu – the kids in those primary schools will never again sing that finishing the 7th grade means the Last Year of going to school. And that is a victory of momentous proportions. But it's also a victory of momentous proportions the statement of my friend's father when he says to his son that about that the opening of Lukima Secondary School -- "What a blessing from God!" How wonderful that he didn't say "What a blessing from those people." We must be doing something right in the way that we are going about doing this work that people sense that it is something coming from God. We certainly sense it! We marvel in less than three years we already have eight schools open and seven more under construction. Proof that it couldn't be coming from us. That is how I've decided God works. He does the incredible so that there is no way that we can explain away what has happened by attributing it to ourselves. We marvel that God seems to be opening doors in neighboring countries – is it possible that it was only ten days ago that we were being received by the Minister of Education in the neighboring country of Malawi? And being told to come, come, that the door is wide open. Surely this whole work is indeed a blessing from God! And how fortunate, incredibly fortune we are to get to be involved in it!

Thanks for being a part of this with us!