



## Our ninth school in Tanzania Steve Vinton, January 30, 2008

This morning I got the great pleasure of standing in front of all of my students here at Madisi and sharing with them the wonderful news we received late last night that early that morning, on January 29, 2008, Malindindo Secondary School, our ninth school here in Tanzania, officially opened its doors! With 147 students!

Every one of those kids had passed primary school either this year or last year or the year before. They had all shared together in the bitter disappointment of seeing their names not come out on the list of the few each year who are chosen to go to the government boarding school far away from their village. They all had to go through the experience of being forced to give up any further hope of ever getting to go to school again.

And now, something which not one of them could have predicted would happen or even dreamed might happen: a school has been built in their village! And so, neatly and very proudly dressed in their new school uniforms, they paraded into their beautiful new classrooms. They were getting a "second chance" at life that neither they nor their parents had ever imagined could have happened.

Hundreds of parents came out to cheer as those students and their teachers went into their classrooms. Godfrey and Wilfred who had travelled to Malindindo to represent us all and preside over the official opening of the school, were then invited by the 22 old elders of the village to a special ceremony to express their thanks for the wonderful thing that had been done for the children of the village. I can hear Godfrey telling them, as he has in village after village here in Tanzania, that there is no way

that Village Schools Tanzania could have possibly have opened all of these schools in three short years unless it was God Himself who was causing all this to happen. The school in Malindindo is open today because literally thousands of people made bricks and hauled stones and sand and carried countless buckets of water. The school in Malindindo is open today because so many people were generous with their money and made it possible for us to buy cement and metal roofing and desks and blackboards. The school in Malindindo is open today because Fanueli and Justin agreed to go to a village far away from their homes, to work with people they did not know, in order to organize them in an incredible 100 day effort to build a school! Godfrey is right! Somehow the God who created this vast universe heard the cries deep down in the hearts of those 147 students – and their parents! – and caused a great effort to come together that culminated in the building of that school and its opening yesterday.

What I didn't share with my students this morning though was the second half of Godfrey's email that he sent to me. That was where Godfrey explained to me about our good friend, Nchimbi, a catholic priest who serves in the village of Mpepo, had come with the news from the village of Ulolela to say that their school also was indeed finished, and that there would be hundreds of parents waiting for Godfrey and Wilfred to arrive so that they could together celebrate the opening of their new school. Godfrey and I had discussed the possibility that this might happen before he and Wilfred left on their trip last Saturday. We knew that with weeks and weeks of heavy rains the road from Mbinga to the village of Ulolela would be completely impassable, and we had

decided together that no matter what, Godfrey should never try to drive the car on that road.

Which is why our dear friend Nchimbi had already prepared two motorcycles. And had them ready to take Godfrey and Wilfred to the village!

There is no cell phone service where they have gone to so I wait back here at Madisi, quite

nervous about them traveling on motorcycles all of those hours over those roads because I positively hate motorcycles after having fallen in the mud and the sand so many times myself.

But I'm also totally full of anticipation and an eagerness that is hard to fully explain.

Might it be possible that our tenth school will also be born this week?!?