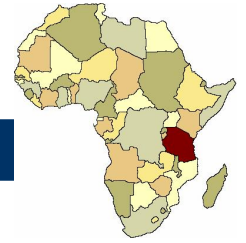


Tanzanian Testimony



VOLUME 3; ISSUE 4

LORIEN KNAPP

APRIL 2009

Dear Friends,

April showers... indeed it has been a rainy month and we are BLESSED to have an abundance of water. The land is green and lush and the rice paddies overflowing. Although there are many sicknesses that sprout up in the wet season, we are still grateful for the extra water. The dry season is just around the corner, and soon it will be dusty and even hotter.

It has been a busy month, and we have had many new boys appearing at our doors at TCRC. It seems that there are seasons of migration for the children in the streets. Some months we have no guests and the numbers in the street seem to be constant. In other months there can be hundreds of new children, new faces, and new stories. April has been a month with MANY new faces... slowly we try to embrace these boys and shower love upon them.

We are always faced with the challenge of meeting both the needs of the boys and the needs of the system of which we are a part. We never want to turn boys away from our doors and send them back to the streets, but sometimes our capacity does not allow us to care for them as we would like. Each month we pray for the financial needs to be met. We pray for the government to be accepting of our decisions. We pray for the worldwide church to embrace this ministry. There are so many worldly factors we battle against in order to serve these children in a Godly manner. So many times the biggest prayer is not only for the boys in our care, but for the understanding of the outside world. Please help us to pray for doors to be opened, hearts changed, and life sustained.

PRAYER CONCERNS:

- ✓ **Praise God for the great love He is building in the hearts of our TCRC boys. Praise Him for the amazing growth, and honest change that is happening.**
- ✓ **Please pray for all of the ministry Red Tape to be cut so that we are able to serve more effectively.**
- ✓ **Pray for the staff of TCRC to be driven by love, even in frustrating circumstances. Pray that we can be imitators of Christ.**

If you wish to offer financial support, mail check to:

AIM: Finance PO Box 178 Pearl River NY 10965

Checks should be made payable to AIM in order to be tax-deductible. Include a note stating my name, and the money will be credited to my account.

Your support and encouragement are appreciated!

Holding Babies

Here in Mwanza there are many different organizations reaching to street children and orphans. Very few of these groups are Christian organizations, and each one operates using a different model. As part of my research I have discovered that the turnover rate is quite high at most of the other centers because there is no spiritual healing offered. The children are left with a void that causes them to continue searching either in the streets, or other centers. One of the reasons so many children stay at TCRC is because we try to reach to them holistically. Regardless of the different mission statement each Center offers, we try to work together as we are able, to help get children out of the streets.

One particular Center in Mwanza reaches to new-born babies, raising them until they are 5-years-old, and then sending them to centers for older kids. The center gets these babies through many different avenues. One of the most common situations occurs when a mother dies while giving birth. If she does not have a close family or support network the baby is often abandoned. These small ones are then sent to the center to be cared for until they are older. Another common situation is when teenage mothers give birth in the streets and then abandon the babies out of fear and inability to cope with the enormous responsibility of motherhood. Those babies are discovered in the streets and taken to a place of refuge...

When the boys learned about this center they were thrilled about the idea of going to hold babies and play with small children. We often pick a day to go and visit the little ones. I take a group of 4 or 5 boys and we play with the children, often just holding those who cry or need their noses wiped. The Center has mostly women workers so the babies don't get a lot of opportunity to interact with men. It is a great chance for our guys to act in a fatherly way, teaching the babies that there are decent men in the world. It always takes a while for the small ones to warm up to our boys, but once they do the interaction is wonderful. Our boys cherish the moments that they can go and minister to the babies. They are filled with joy to love those small members of their street family.

Let us Break Bread Together

It is always a joy to have prayer answered so quickly. I am grateful for the cloud of witnesses supporting us here in Mwanza; the voices of many are surely heard by our Father. A few months ago I mentioned my desire to be a part of a bible study. As the month of April began I saw an opportunity for such a group to begin meeting for weekly fellowship. We have a number of young men at TCRC who have really been struggling with some issues in their lives. They have become quite distrustful and hopeless because of the many hardships they have faced in the past, but also because they see so many barriers awaiting them in the future. This group of young men has become quite isolated for various reasons, and I have tried so hard to reach to them... with no success.

Finally, God inspired me to ask these boys if they would like to begin a bible study group. I explained that I felt inadequate to help them to heal from their past wounds, or prepare them for future life battles... but if we could just meet together faithfully and study God's word, He would do the healing and teaching work. We merely needed to make ourselves available to Him. I asked each of the boys if they wanted to be in the group, and I was surprised at how enthusiastically they responded. I admit that my faith was lacking when I asked them. I expected to hear many negative responses. It just goes to show that God's vision is better than our own. It seemed that each of these boys was ripe for picking, just waiting for an opportunity to be immersed in a fellowship group.

At TCRC there are many opportunities for boys to hear the word and be active in worship. We have a choir, evening devotions and prayer meetings... but it seems that these opportunities are more attractive for the boys who have greater certainty about their faith... unfortunately those on the fringes feel unable to join these groups; they are sort of like the ICU. They must be tended to in a very special environment before they will be ready to join the rest of the community. They have some really hard questions to ask, and some important discussions to explore... they need a safe place to share their hearts because they are not yet strong enough to stand firmly in the world. Each of these boys is like a young tree whose trunk is not strong enough to withstand the force of the wind. Another strong stick must be tied to the trunk to give it support until it has grown tough enough to stand on its own. The counsel and intimacy of our group is like that support rod. For one month now we have been meeting and studying the Word. We read sections of scripture and then discuss the words and the relevancy these ideas have for our lives. The boys have begun opening up about their personal struggles. They are becoming more comfortable to share, and advise one another. I pray that they will soon see their place in the larger Church body.

Deuteronomy 8:3B

*... People do not live by bread alone;
rather, we live by every word that comes
from the mouth of the lord.*

MWANZA TOWN

I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT ENJOY SEEING MWANZA. IT IS THE SECOND LARGEST CITY IN TANZANIA WITH ABOUT 1.5 MILLION PEOPLE. IT IS A HILLY, ROCKY LAND ON THE EDGE OF LAKE VICTORIA. MWANZA IS A PRETTY DIVERSE PLACE, HOSTING MANY RELIGIONS AND ECONOMIC CLASSES. IT HAS A SORT OF MAGNETIC FORCE, DRAWING PEOPLE TO COME AND SEARCH FOR A BETTER LIFE OR A CHANCE TO FIND WORK.

