

## ILULA ORPHAN PROGRAM (IOP)



NEWSLETTER – AUGUST 2015

Dear IOP friends,

We are so excited to share all the wonderful work that IOP Tanzania has been doing during the month of August 2015! *Enjoy reading!*



*Many of the girls who are cared for at the Ilula Orphan Program (IOP) Orphan Center.*

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## Finishing the Examination Hall



IOP is constantly expanding and working for improvement. One of the biggest projects right now is the construction of the buildings for the Lords Hill High School. The first phase of the construction of the class room buildings is completed and the classes are already in use, but there is also an ongoing construction of an examination hall. The hall is very important because it is the requirement by The Ministry for Education and Vocational Training in Tanzania that national examinations must be conducted in examination halls, instead of being conducted in regular classrooms.

Since the national examinations will be held in November, it is urgent for the hall to be, not necessarily finished, but usable, by that time. The budget for finishing the hall to the point of being usable is 336,000,000 Tsh in total (about 176,843USD). Since the construction started in January 2015, all of the foundation, the underground beams, and the columns are completed. This has cost 133,000,000 Tsh (About 70,000USD), which is all the money IOP has had for this purpose. The lack of funding has caused the work on the construction to stop for now. In order for the examination hall to be usable in November, IOP still needs an additional of 203,000,000 Tsh (106,843USD). IOP is requesting good will and assistance from our IOP friends inside and outside Tanzania so that our school use the hall as required by the government.

This budget has been broken down into pieces, so that it is possible for anyone who would like to donate for a particular purpose—for example, cement, windows, etc. We want to thank our friends and supporters for always helping us in times of need. Also, we thank Knowit Company and Engebraten High School in Norway for donating the start-up funds for the construction of this hall. God bless you! *Pamoja tunaweza!* Together we can do it!

### Interview: Past & Current Directors of IOP

*By: Nikki Massey-Hastings, USA*

In April, Berit Skarre, Founder of IOP and Managing Director retired and handed “over reigns to Edson Msigwa, the new Managing Director of IOP. The pair was interviewed regarding this significant transition in the organization.

Edson stated that the process has been relatively smooth because it has been a gradual process. Berit noted that although the transition has been taken one step at a time, the “burden





and responsibility flew out of my head,” immediately and she felt “relief” to be only responsible for being an employee of IOP. She said “I feel that IOP has been so much a part of me, my life, my bloodstream... It has been a joy to be able to work here as just a worker and be able to have [only] some responsibilities, like building the school and [being] part of the girls’ lives.” When asked about how she is managing the shift from leader to worker, she suggested “I am very conscious about what I am doing, what I should not do, where I should not put my nose in anymore... [I try to consistently] differentiate between leader and worker.” She continues to enjoy being involved in various committees.

Edson was chosen by the Board to receive a promotion from Administrative Officer to Managing Director due to the loyalty and commitment he has shown to IOP (he has been an employee of IOP for almost 11 years), he is well educated, and he was personally recommended by Berit. According to Berit, the additional skills Edson brings to the table include that “he also knows laws of country in detail, especially in the areas of administration and human resources. He has leadership skills that will benefit IOP. He’s realistic.”

Edson stated that he is committed to fulfilling IOP’s vision of a healthy, educated community which values human rights and integrity. He experiences great satisfaction from his job, particularly when he visibly sees the difference IOP is making—for example, seeing the girls at the Orphan Center happy and when students have all the resources they need for their education. He dreams of, and is working towards, a self-sufficient IOP and IOP staff that are “efficient and disciplined.”

IOP is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) and development project connected to the United Methodist Church. As a result, according to IOP’s constitution, the Managing Director should be picked with approval from United Methodist Church. Both Edson and Berit were called to the annual conference of United Methodist Church of Tanzania. Berit attended to say her goodbyes, to share appreciation all the support IOP has received, and to introduce Edson. Edson received a powerful, moving welcome from the Bishop Nkulu Ntambo, which was unexpected. He was called upfront to be introduced to whole country of pastors/missionaries and to be anointed blessed by the Bishop. The Bishop praised IOP for all the work it has done and requested an additional meeting with Edson to review all of the details of the report in further depth. He was very impressed with what IOP had accomplished during the year.

Edson felt very valued and genuinely appreciated by the Bishop. He was also invited to sit with the Bishop—Edson said he felt “no hierarchy” from him and felt very at home. Throughout the conference, they shared many meals together. Edson noted that he felt very “undeserving” of such special treatment and also extremely honored. Berit added, “it was really something that touched us.”

Both Berit and Edson noted that there have been some challenges in staff and community responses to the transition of leadership. There were fears about the strength of the organization without Berit at the forefront. Edson indicated that although understandable, these fears are unfounded. IOP has always been a team effort and all staff work together to be “co-authors of IOP’s destiny.” Edson is dedicated to taking all of the things that Berit has stood for, maintaining those values, and developing IOP as an organization.



Moving forward, Edson is committed to nurturing the sense of family among the staff. He has encouraged Thursday sports/games day for employees to bond. He also encourages staff to have volunteers in their homes to build friendships. He also feels it is important that all IOP staff go on an outing away from IOP to get to know one another, reflect on the year, and plan for the coming year.

With respect to Berit's wishes for IOP, she said "I hope we will continue to be a family—we must continue to be a family. We have succeeded in being a family because everyone has been accessible for everyone. Also because of the creation and loyalty to family traditions. We have very strong traditions around Christmas, for example, with the girls that have been built up over 10 years. We decorate the same way each year—December 1<sup>st</sup>. Each girl gets a branch on the Christmas tree to decorate and each girl has their very own ornament that is the same each year. We also have a Christmas party for all staff, volunteers, and members of the Methodist church."

Berit strongly emphasized the critical importance of the Christmas traditions for the girls at the Orphan Center—children that were raised without traditions and many of whom have endured traumas. Berit could not state the importance of predictability and tradition in a family enough. Berit noted that some of the older girls have already started asking—in July and August—how Christmas will be this year without Berit here. These traditions are profoundly important to them because IOP is their family. To manage this transition in helpful ways, IOP staff will need to do what it is best at—come together to make sure these traditions remain a foundation of IOP and the lives of the girls at the Orphan Center.

Berit's offered some words of wisdom to Edson as the new Managing Director "be a person—not only a title" and to IOP as a whole "we need to plan far ahead in finances in order to facilitate IOP's independence."

## **Health Care & Preventable Diseases**

*Written By: Nikki Massey-Hastings, USA*



Edson is dedicated to helping IOP Orphan Center girls, sponsored students, and employees receive adequate health care, regular check-ups, and treatment for preventable and treatable diseases. In Tanzania, many people do not have reliable health care (insurance or government sponsored care) and must pay for treatment in cash.

Given the level of poverty, this is a significant challenge.

Consequently, although the life-expectancy in Tanzania has increased, parents and children die every day from preventable and treatable diseases. IOP is urging supporters to consider sponsoring children to receive coverage from the National Health Service. For 58,000 Tanzanian Shillings per year (only \$26 USD per year), children will receive regular check-ups, prevention and treatment for preventable diseases! Additionally, all employees can receive coverage for the cost of 3 percent of their salaries plus a contribution by IOP (the employer) of 3 percent. IOP would greatly appreciate help in providing health care to all that IOP serves.

## **IOP Orphan Center Girls' Pajama Party**

*Written By: Nikki Massey-Hastings, USA*

On Saturday August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015, a group of volunteers from Italy prepared and executed a Pajama Party for the IOP Orphan Center girls. A Sponsor who volunteered at IOP last summer provided a donation to do something special for the Center girls. The volunteers (Italy: Giulia, Marta, Lisa, Francesca, Alessia, Chiara, and Ilenia; Sweden: Julia; Belgium: Bee; France: Sixteen) prepared a chocolate cake on the morning of the party. The party began at 5:30 p.m. IOP girls were asked to come to the party wearing their pajamas and the volunteers also wore their pajamas. The hall was decorated with balloons. The girls and volunteers sang Tanzanian songs, danced, had dinner, and then girls were presented with gifts (slips and Teddy Bears).



Giulia, from Italy, reported that her favorite memory of the Pajama Party was the look on the girls' faces when they found out the party was only for them. They were surprised and felt special. Dancing and laughing was another highlight of the party. Lastly, 2 new girls arrived at the IOP Center on the day of the party (Judith and Delila). The volunteers were excited to include these 2 new little ones in a night of fun — what a fitting welcome to IOP!

## **IOP Knows How to Party (and Fundraise)!**

*By: Nikki Massey-Hastings, USA*



On Thursday August 6, 2015, IOP had a large combined party. It included a celebration of the birthdays of all IOP staff (Elizabeth, Marco, Sauru), IOP Orphan Center girls (Bellina, Scolastica, Winnefreda, Ana, Renata, Vicky, Elimina, & Stella), and volunteers' (Marta, Nina, Sixtine, Chiara), a welcome for the new volunteers (Ryan and Nikki—USA; Miranda, Nina, Linea, Karin—Sweden), and a goodbye party for the volunteers from Italy (Giulia, Marta, Lisa, Francesca, Alessia, Chiara, and Ilenia).

The party opened with introductions and goodbyes. It also included a fundraiser to raise money for the IOP Center girls to have an educational field-trip. 471,000 Tanzanian Shillings (\$226 USD) were raised! Guests of the party purchased a piece of birthday cake and then were able to choose who they would like to give the piece of cake to. There were also singing performances from the girls and staff, dancing, and dinner for all!

## 47 Blackboards Have Been Refinished!

By: Nikki Massey-Hastings, USA

A group of Scouts from Luxembourg arrived at IOP on Wednesday August 6, 2015 late in the evening. They camped in tents in the field at IOP for 2 weeks and participated in many activities to help the IOP community during that time. Scouts from the IOP Orphan Center and from around Ilula Village participated in a Scouting weekend August 7<sup>th</sup> through August 9<sup>th</sup> led by the Luxembourg group.

The main project the Scouts did during their stay was to paint new blackboards in many schools in the area. Many of the blackboards in the schools have been worn down to the point that it is difficult to see what the teacher writes on the board, making it challenging for students to take accurate notes, and consequently, to learn. Despite logistical challenges with respect to the cargo shipment of the supplies for the project, the Scouts were able to paint many more boards than they had planned! The team completed **47 blackboards in 6 schools!**



According to Annick, a teacher and Scout of 20 years, much effort and preparation occurred for this project prior to the Scouts' arrival in Tanzania. They did a substantial amount of fundraising to purchase the paint. Secondly, due to the flammability of the paint, it could not be shipped by airplane—instead, it needed to be shipped in a cargo boat. This was quite the tough process! Asante Sana Scouts!

## New Girls Arrive at the Orphan Center

By: Nikki Massey-Hastings, USA



### *Delila, 4 years old*

Delila's father passed away shortly after she was born, her mother passed away when she was 2 years old, and shortly thereafter, her grandmother also passed away. She and her 2 brothers were then cared for by her aunt. Her brother was then bitten by a dog, and because Delila's aunt did not have the money to pay for treatment, he also lost his life. Delila's aunt requested that she receive a placement at IOP Orphan Center because she could not support the basic needs of both her children and Delila and her brother. Thank you to Delila's sponsor for giving her a safe place to live where will be well cared for and nourished!

### *Judith, 7 years old*

Judith has never known her father and shortly after her birth, her mother disappeared. Early in her life, she went to live with her maternal aunt. However, her aunt's husband did not want to care for Judith and abused both her aunt and Judith. To avoid a particularly terrible act of violence, Judith ran away, however, her cousins ended up being hurt by their father. When they were taken to the hospital, government officials were called and the aunt's husband was taken to court. Judith's aunt wrote to IOP requesting a safe place for Judith.





## Former IOP Sponsee Gets Married

*By: Nikki Massey-Hastings, USA*



A former IOP Sponsee, Wanini Mwenda, married Onolina Matinya on Saturday August 15, 2015. The ceremony was held in a nearby church and the reception was held in the hall at IOP. The IOP staff, girls, and volunteers worked hard to decorate the hall and create a memorable evening. The reception included a dinner, speeches, gifts, and cake. The wedding was privately sponsored. IOP wishes the happy couple the best of luck in their new lives together — safari njema!

## IOP Mini-Marathon

On Saturday August 29th, 2015, the third Mini-Marathon took place at Ilula. Early in the morning you could already hear the excited voices coming from the Library, which is beautifully named the “Holland House of Books”.

Many people gathered to take part at this Fundraising-Event to raise money for the new Library near the IOP Center. One of the people was Helen Clarke the Chairperson of the Luxembourg Committee. She, her daughter Lucy and her friend Bonita Phillips were doing a great job making it a very special moment for all of us. Helen is one of directors of Sunflower Montessori in Luxembourg and as well a teacher in a Montessori-school so you could see her passion and fire for creating a new piece that helps the improvement of education in this big puzzle called IOP.



The participants can still hear her kind words, full of love and admiration as the Marathon started. Helen set off for the start wearing the number 01 and at the finish of the race; she informed us all that she had decided to fulfil the biblical scripture “the first shall be the last”.

The participants were divided into three groups: Runners, walkers and, of course a group for our beautiful pre-school and primary school children. In total, 104 starting numbers were given to the lovely people working for IOP. It didn't matter which age, shape, clothes, running shoes (or no shoes in many cases) you are in and which shoes you were wearing. You could see people running in ballerinas, thongs or sandals. The important thing was to take part in this wonderful event and you could see the happiness in every body's eyes, because they knew they were creating something very important for the future of the children. It is impressive to see how committed everybody is to this project. One can also see this on the amount they raised:

The marathon started with the runners, soon after you could hear the starting signal the runners were already out of sight. They were filled with so much energy, that they started sprinting down the road. Short after the running group, the walkers took their place and started with the same energy in their legs and hearts. The kids passed the walkers soon after they started so it was a mixed group filling the streets of Masukanzi and Isele. There were different checkpoints with staff-members in bright green t-shirts and red flags waving and smiling at us to keep on going as fast as we could. Everyone made it to the finish line and was greeted with applause and shouts of joy.

The prizes for the winners were sponsored by the same group of Scouts from Luxembourg, who also completed painting 47 blackboards in 6 different schools, as you can read further up in this article. The winners were divided into male and female winners and they received prizes in form of clothes, school material and bags.

### Initiatives

1. **Do you have some OLD PIECES OF FABRIC that you don't know what to do with?**  
They would be very useful for our girls HERE at IOP CENTER! They could be used to create covers for our old chairs! Please send us your old pieces of fabric!
2. **IOP has some projects that need fundraising and financial support!**
  - o Funds to complete the *examination hall and the girls' dormitory* at the Lord's Hill Secondary School
  - o Annual running expenses \$ 25,000 for the IOP Center (Orphanage)!
  - o Finishing the *new welding house* \$9,800
  - o Annual running expenses of the IOP pre- school "Kids' Corner" \$10,500.
  - o We have a good number of *students waiting for Sponsorship* so they can go to school.

### Contact Information

If you would like *more information about projects and/or sponsoring* please contact:

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\*\*\*GOD BLESS YOU - MUNGU AKUBARIKI \*\*\*

*If you have any questions concerning new projects, please send an email to our IOP Managing Director Edson Msigwa ([edmsigwa@yahoo.com](mailto:edmsigwa@yahoo.com)).*

***Prepared by Nikki & Enicka***