

# Postcard from Tanzania

June 2, 2008 **Our visit to Safina House, Street Kids Ministry**

Some of our church family in Austin will remember after our first trip to Tanzania we asked the church VBS mission project in 2005 to be the Safina Kids Street Ministry, a home in Tanzania sponsored by the Harvey's for orphaned and abandoned children. That VBS gift helped them get indoor plumbing—not a bathroom like ours, but at least the “squatty potty” and shower are now inside.



The home was founded about 10 years ago when the Harvey's were approached by Werema Mwita about the need for this home. There were, and are, children living in deplorable conditions on the streets and being abused in homes, and others whose relatives are simply unable to care for them. These children, some as young as 5 or 6 years old, scrounge for food wherever they can find it, do whatever they have to do to survive. The home is completely funded by private donations. No government money is provided, even when a social worker brings a child to the home.

Tammie took Phil and me to visit the home while she and the director, Mwita, and the third trustee, Babu, conducted a quarterly trustee meeting. Imagine our happy surprise when the first person to welcome us as we stepped out of

the vehicle was 17-year-old *Richard*, whom we had met 2004! He did not remember us at first, but we certainly remembered him. His English is vastly improved. He has one more year of secondary (high school) school to complete. He would like to attend university to study Mechanical Engineering. We were given a tour of the facilities and saw many projects started, yet unfinished. A construction team from Holland is coming in July, and will accomplish what they can in two weeks.



Tammie and Babu provide oversight for Mwita.

So...what to give orphaned and abandoned children who have nothing? *Coke and candy, of course!* Several of us went shopping for these items and for food for dinner.



While our evening meal was being cooked (supervised by the cook, assisted by several of the kids) the Trustees met and Phil and I talked and played with the kids. We were shown their school books – in English – and some of them told us what they'd like to be when they finish school.

The sugarless gum Amy sent from Austin was a big hit and a humorous hindrance to Phil's picture taking. Their enthusiastic chewing disrupted getting a nice picture of each of them. Several shots had to be redone! (“OK, this time, NO CHEWING!”)





We blew up balloons with the kids and batted them around. They blew soap bubbles. Some of them decided I needed new balloon accessories.



It was well after dark when everyone piled into the dining room for evening devotions and to eat. As Mwita played the guitar, we sang (well, they sang)—it was beautiful Phil videoed so you'll hear it when we return. Then they introduced themselves and told us what level of school they attend. The youngest, who isn't old enough to go to school yet, not wanting to be outdone by the others, assured us he is in level 4! Maale led the evening devotion, John 3:16. Richard translated everything into English for us.



They brought in a pitcher and a basin and poured water over our hands. The meal was finally served (accompanied by the Coke and Fanta) from huge pots. We ate on glass plates but the kids ate from stainless steel trays. We all used spoons. Although by that time I was so hungry that everything looked good, the simple meal was delicious. They got candy for dessert, and after a time of prayer we said goodbye, and left them with all those dishes to clean up!



*I must share a few of the children's stories with you...*



**Abdala**

**Abdala**, the little one who told us he is in "level 4" is the illegitimate son of a Tanzanian Parliamentarian and a bar maid. When he was two years old a social worker brought him to Safina, covered with sores and tummy distended with malnutrition. His picture and story were in the local paper. Now he is a happy well-fed and cared for little fellow, obviously looking forward to going to school next fall! He receives no support from his father or any governmental agency.

**Maale**, the young man who led our evening devotions, was passed off to an aunt when he was very young. He was mistreated, and at the age of about 6 (no one knows for certain) he ran away with an older cousin. They jumped a train and rode as far as Dodoma, but the heavy rains had washed out the rails and no trains were able to get through the city. For weeks he and his cousin hid among the containers piled up at the station. Police raided the train station to round up the street kids there. Chaos ensued and though Maale evaded the police, he got separated from his cousin and *never saw him again*. Maale continued to live among the cartons at the train station until Mwita, who knew about kids at the station, went there and brought him to Safina. Maale is a good student and wants to work in a bank when he grows up.



**Maale**

One little boy was sleeping in the outdoor toilet because his mother who, was addicted to alcohol, would come home intoxicated and beat him badly. When Mwita found him, he was scrounging for food in the trash cans of the market area.

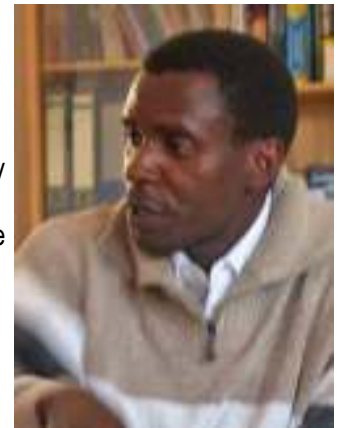
Several years ago Maria's grandmother (her parents are dead) brought her to Safina House and *would not leave the property until Mwita agreed to keep her!* Maria is now ready—this September, to attend Teacher's Training and in one year will be employable as a teacher, and in two years will receive her teacher's certificate.

Sadly, not every story is a success. Rarely, but on occasion, even with the best encouragement and assistance Mwita can provide, a child will decide he cannot live with the structure and rules, and will decide to leave Safina. Of course the result of that decision is so predictable and tragic.

Another nice aspect of Safina is that it is an official project of Pioneer Bible Translators (PBT) and every penny sent for Safina goes directly to them—PBT sends 100% of contributions designated as "Harvey-Safina" to Mwita to use at the home and he accounts to Tammie and Babu for how funds are spent. He and his children live at the home. We are amazed at how a very small amount of US Dollars makes such a huge difference in this part of Africa. I'm reminded of the small boy with his fish and bread that Jesus multiplied to feed thousands! He WILL multiply our small amounts and feed many! Of course, their needs are many and they have desperately small resources.

Several have mentioned wanting to sponsor a specific child, and I completely understand the desire to develop a relationship with one child, to see a face and know you are making a difference in THAT child's life. Most organizations who do offer sponsorships are working with children who still live at home. In the case of Safina, individual sponsorship would be very difficult unless committed sponsors could be found for all 19 children at the same time. How could Mwita single one child out to have better food, clothes, school supplies than the others?

Anyone interested in praying for a specific Safina child, or Mwita who is always under pressure, let me know and I'll send you their picture. **Believe me, they need prayer!** Satan is always prowling about for opportunities to snatch such children back into his darkness. .



Mwita - a true shepherd's heart



The Safina cook and her beautiful smile



Every child has a job (even in meal preparing)



Richard showed us around the property



Removing rocks from of the rice...  
Rice is included in nearly every meal.



Safina House stove



Safina House kitchen

Love to you all,  
June, Mom, Grandmom