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NAHIMANA'S NEWS

Dear Friends,

Well, here we are again, heading towards another Christmas season – my 25th Christmas since I moved to Burundi...it still seems strange to be putting up the tree with sweat dripping down my face, but never mind!

Restoration of Hope:

We are so grateful to God that we have been able to continue to care for so many children, young people, widows and those with mental and physical handicaps throughout the Coronavirus pandemic. While many associations have really struggled and some have had to close, due to lack of funding, we have always been able to feed and care for the extended RoH family, and for this we are truly thankful to both God and to you, our faithful supporters. Honda is a man of vision and always has plans for how the work of RoH could expand, to reach more of those who are living in dire poverty and need. So, if anyone knows anyone with a surfeit of cash, who would like to support a women's project, do get in touch! In past years we ran a very successful Women's Sewing Centre, where over the course of 4 years, 100 impoverished women were trained as tailors and opened their own small businesses. Honda would like to restart this project at the Hope House in Mutakura, because young women in that area are in desperate need and have no training or skills to enable them to work their way out of poverty, and many resort to prostitution as a way to earn a living. We have the premises, we have an excellent teacher, we have so many women who would love to be trained...all that is missing is the finance to purchase machines and sewing materials. God will make a way!

Education: Thanks to Hope in Burundi, our educational support charity, and the generosity of so many friends and family, who sacrificially give towards educating young people here in Burundi, in September 137 children and young people were able to start the new academic year. We have 83 children in

primary school, 44 in secondary and 10 who are studying for their degrees at university. When we started Restoration of Hope, we only worked with ex-street-boys, but now 77 boys and 60 girls are receiving an education, which is brilliant.

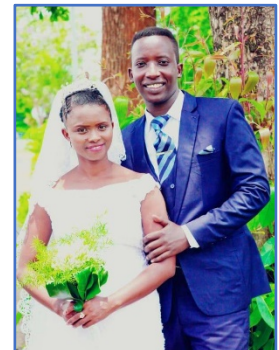
Vincent finished his degree at Summit University here in Burundi, but due to administration problems at the university, his graduation has still not taken place. Sadly, this is a common occurrence in Burundi – many students must wait months or even years to finally have their graduation ceremonies and receive their degree certificates. Joseph and Rukundo, two young men who have been with us for many years, graduated from High School in July and are now looking for employment .



Master's Scholarship: Egide is one of the original group of young boys who came to live with us at our home in 2004. He completed his degree a few years ago and has been working for the UN as a translator for returning refugees, here in Burundi. Egide taught himself English and has always wanted to continue in education. For the last few years he has been applying for scholarships, and in August heard that he had been awarded a prestigious Chevening Scholarship by the UK Government, to study for a MA in International Social Development at the University of East Anglia in Norwich. Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic and issues with his visa application, Egide was delayed in arriving in the UK, but finally made it to university a month later than anticipated. He is settling in well but finding the weather pretty

chilly. We are so grateful to God that Egide is staying near to my brother David and his wife Nicola, and they have really helped him to get integrated into St Alban's Church, where Nicola's brother is one of the vicars.

Wedding: Bienvenu, Ami's younger brother, has been living at Hope House Mutakura for several years and, after completing his university degree, recently got married. He has now left the Hope House and they are renting their own home nearby.



New Life: Madudu, one of the first 5 boys who we started RoH with so many years ago, got married last year and his wife has just given birth to their first child, a baby girl called Chloe. Madudu is working with a local church as an evangelist – it is so good to see how far he has come in the last 17 years – from begging on the streets to winning souls for Christ!

Challenges:

Wherever there is life, there are challenges! And in caring for so many lives, the challenges can sometimes feel overwhelming. Life in Burundi is not easy, but the best thing to do when it all feels too much is to go to God in prayer...

Prayer Points:

1. Due to a shortage of dollars in the country, there have been on-going petrol shortages since August. This has a knock-on effect in increasing the price of food items, charcoal etc. I know that England has been having similar struggles, but when you have over 150 mouths to feed it can be a real challenge. Please pray for continued miraculous provision, and that what we do have will miraculously stretch to be able to cover all we need to do. Please also pray that God provides all the finance needed to be able to celebrate Christmas with all the RoH family and those we support.
2. Coronavirus continues to be a big problem in Burundi. The new government are trying to put measures in place to lessen the spread, but the idea of social distancing still hasn't taken hold. Since the end of November, the Covid Vaccination has been made available to the population, but because it is not being actively promoted by those in power, most people are too scared to take it, and so people continue to die unnecessarily. We were amazed when Burundi was taken off the UK governments Red List, but the discovery of the Omicron variant in Southern Africa may put us back on the no-fly list... Please pray for on-going protection over everyone in our care.
3. One of the young ladies from our Gitega Hope House has been causing concerns for over a year. She dropped out of school, started a hairdressing apprenticeship, then dropped out of that. She would regularly go missing, saying she was going to visit family, but when we checked, she was not there. To cut a very long story short, a few weeks ago she decided to permanently leave the Hope House, and we have just discovered that she is pregnant. She is over 18 and is making her own life-choices, but as parent figures, it is hard to see one of your 'children' making decisions that will change the course of their life. For now, by her own choice, she is no longer living at the Hope House, but we will continue to be there for her and offer help and support where needed. Please pray that everything goes well during her pregnancy and that her child is born strong and healthy.
4. We need to employ a new house mama in Gitega who can provide a motherly figure for the children and young people there. Please pray that God gives wisdom in the choosing of this lady, and that she will love and care for the family to the best of her ability.

Answered Prayers:

Thank you so much for your prayers over the last 6 months – we serve a God who answers prayer:

- The surgery on Claude's son, Jo-Jesse who had hydrocephalus, went well and already his head has decreased in size. He is growing and developing well with no sign of any brain damage or developmental delay, which is fabulous. Jo-Jesse will return to hospital for check-ups in February.

- Japhet and Christian (the 2 boys who moved from Gitega) have now been living in the Hope House in Mutakura for almost a year. Christian has settled in well and is enjoying training to be a mechanic. Japhet is still creating challenges, so on-going prayers would be awesome.
- Although he had to return to hospital once more in the last few months, Pastor Joel is now doing well and is in a much better place, physically and emotionally. He and his wife have recently welcomed their 7th child into the world.
- Lake Tanganyika has receded somewhat during dry season. The lake is still higher than it was originally but praise God the port remained open and continues to function without any further problems.

Nahimana Family News:



Bethany spent 2 months with us in the summer. This was her last chance to visit before starting her 4-year, combined Degree and Masters, in Dual Registration Adult and Mental Health Nursing at the University of Birmingham. It was so good for us all to be together again, and the highlight of her visit was our week-long mini tour of Burundi. We got to see the waterfalls, German Gorge, visited the Gitega Hope House Family and got to stay on the banks of Lake Tanganyika for 3 nights. Swimming in the Lake (and not

getting eaten by hippos and crocodiles!) was wonderful.

On 18th August, the day before our 21st Wedding Anniversary, Bethany and I flew back to England and went straight into Hotel Quarantine just outside Heathrow Airport. Unlike the horror stories we had heard of terrible food, rat infested rooms etc., we found our stay relatively pleasant. When you come from Burundi, having power 24:7, hot water, fully functioning internet, a soft bed and 3 meals a day provided for you, it all seems pretty luxurious! The only challenge was being shut in the room 24:7 for 11 days, apart from a short, daily exercise period, which did feel somewhat prison like...but then we saw some refugee families who had just arrived from Afghanistan and were staying in the same hotel, and we realized that we had no right to complain. These people had left everything and fled for their lives – truly, no matter how frustrating quarantine felt, we knew we were blessed in every way.

Once we left quarantine it was wonderful to reunite with my parents for the first time in 2 years, and the next day I was privileged to be able to get my first Covid Vaccine – a real relief for a type 1 diabetic! Within 24 hours of exiting quarantine, I was experiencing severe pain in my left ear. The process of trying to get a doctor's appointment has definitely changed in the 2 years I had been away. Telephone consultations are not the easiest when trying to discern the exact location of an ear problem. Finally

managed to get an appointment and discovered I had a severe infection on the outer ear canal – though excruciatingly painful, the one thing I could rejoice in was that it hadn't started whilst we were locked in the Holiday Inn!

So, our plan was that Bethany and I would have 2.5 weeks together to see friends, do her shopping and prepare for taking her to university. All that came to a grinding halt on the Friday when Bethany received a 1-line message on her online Student Portal declaring that she was ineligible for student finance loans! In April when she first applied, Bethany had been granted basic loans for tuition and living costs, then in May, that was greatly increased when she was deemed eligible to qualify as an independent student. So, to suddenly get the news that she could not have any loans whatsoever, 2 weeks before she was due to arrive at university was mind-blowing.

The next 2 weeks were spent in a haze of making phone calls, writing emails to anyone and everyone we could think of, but in the end, we were told she would just have to fill in the online appeals form (space to write 3 lines of text) and we would hear back hopefully in 2 months' time! You can probably imagine the stress that we were under – we knew God had opened the door for Bethany to go to England – she had already spent 3 years living there to qualify as 'normally resident' but having just spent thousands of pounds on flights and hotel quarantine and not knowing how to move forwards, we were somewhat flummoxed. During this time the car I was driving was rear ended, online purchases disappeared, my ear infection stubbornly decided to stay around and all in all it was really tough. I remember joking to a friend that all I needed was to catch Coronavirus and it would be the cherry on the cake... I tried to remember that God had a plan but did feel somewhat like Eeyore, living under a cloud of doom and gloom.

Eventually the university said that Bethany could go as a fee-paying student until the appeal was finalized – we are so grateful to God for the generous friends who contributed to cover Bethany's first term fees, and so on Sunday 19th September Bethany arrived at university, trusting that God would make a way for her fees to be paid for the rest of the course – either by the appeal being successful or miraculous provision.

On the Wednesday I had my second vaccination and then we received news that the friend who dropped Bethany and I at university had tested positive for Covid. As a precaution I delayed my flight by a week, but then the next day my Dad also tested positive. Bethany contacted me asking me to provide any evidence I could for her appeal process, so the Friday was spent turning her bedroom upside down looking for letters, receipts, bank statements etc – anything that could prove she had arrived in the country in August 2018. I didn't feel awesome but put it down to being tired and frustrated with the appeals process.

However, a PCR test on the Saturday showed that I too had contracted Covid. How does one live through almost 2 years of a pandemic in a country that is doing nothing to protect its citizens and remain healthy, and then come to the UK, with all its rules and regulations and catch it??? The first 4 days were not too bad – I didn't seem as ill as when I had typhoid and malaria in Burundi – just a bit of a cough, tiredness and my blood sugars were all over the place. However, from day 5 onwards my breathing became awful, and I probably should have agreed with the medical advice I was given to go into hospital to get oxygen as my blood oxygen levels dropped into the dangerous category.

On Day 6 I received the news that Chrissie Chapman, the lady I had gone out to Burundi to work with at CRIB in 1997, and who I had served alongside for 24 years, passed away after a series of health battles. Facing loss whilst in isolation was a huge challenge, one that I know many have had to face over the last 2 years. I continued to get weaker and am convinced that if I hadn't had the vaccines, I would not be writing this letter to you today. Being so far away from Honda and the children whilst being so ill was a huge challenge, but I am so grateful that by mid-October I was able to get on a flight and return to Burundi. Just before I left, we received the news that Bethany's appeal had been successful and she would be receiving full loans from Student Finance – so all a bit strange and seemingly pointless, but I'm sure one day we will look back and see God's reasons for allowing this all to happen.

Taking a 20-hour journey after spending almost 4 weeks in bed, was not easy, and by the time I arrived I was ready to collapse. I am so grateful for the angels in disguise who I met in the airport and who filled in my forms, pushed my luggage trolley, and helped me get the PCR test completed before making it out to my family. In the time I was away, Josiah had grown over an inch and is now proud to have a 'little Mum'. Honda, Josiah and Abigail did an amazing job whilst I was away and I returned home to a clean and tidy house...maybe I should go away more often!

After completing her IGCSE's in Sociology and Psychology, where she achieved an A and A*, Abigail has now moved on to online A-level exams. She is also studying A-Level Geography at The King's School and is much happier to be back with her friends in the classroom most days. Abi has joined a cell group and is an active member of the church Blazers group (13-18's).



Josiah is basketball crazy and would happily give up studies and play 24:7. Trying to get him to value his studies and revise for exams is a challenge, but somehow, we shall overcome! A couple of weeks ago he represented the school for the first time at basketball. He is the youngest on the team – most players being 16-18 and yet he scored 24 out of the 49 points for his team in their 49:44 victory. 21 of those points were scored as 3-point throws, which made him very happy.

Bethany has really settled in well to university life. She is a student rep, and member of the Christian Union and has found a church family at Encounter Church, which is relatively close to her university campus. So far, she is passing all assignments and tests, which is really encouraging. We hope to be able to return to the UK as a family next summer, providing rules and regulations don't change again!



Honda is at present in Rwanda receiving his second vaccine (Burundi doesn't offer the same vaccine he had for his first jab). Having seen so many friends and relatives of friends die of Coronavirus, and seen me become so ill, he wasn't prepared to sit and wait for months for the government here to start offering the vaccine. Knowing he is now protected is a real relief for him. Honda's watch shop continues to do well, but the challenge of getting in new stock remains. It seems that Coronavirus has affected everything!

So, that's an update on life out here over the last 6 months...thank you for taking the time to read this mini book – as those of you who know me well know, summarizing is not my strong point!

Thank you for partnering with us to help bring change to Burundi. We are so blessed by those who go above and beyond to support the work of RoH – be that in sacrificial giving, in running Car Boot sales every Sunday throughout the summer as friends from our home church do, in doing a sponsored walk around Historical Sites in Norwich as a friend from St Barnabas' Church did, or by faithfully upholding us in prayer. Through your prayers and financial support, hope is being restored, lives are being changed and the kingdom of heaven is advancing here!

May God richly bless you this Christmastime and may you know His joy and peace in your hearts and homes...

Much love

Honda, Libby, Bethany, Abigail, Josiah and all our extended RoH Family

XXX

On Monday afternoon, before I had the chance to send this newsletter, I received a call that Estella needed to go to hospital. Estella is the young girl I was in Uganda with last Christmas, who was diagnosed with liver cancer. This photo shows Estella's baptism which took place this past Sunday – look how happy she is to be getting baptized! On Monday she became seriously ill at 3pm and then by 3.30 pm had collapsed and became unconscious. At 12.40am on Tuesday



morning, without regaining consciousness, she went to be with Jesus. I was privileged to be with her when she went to glory and am so grateful to God that my prayers were answered, and she didn't suffer at the end. Truly, as it says in Philippians 1:21, **“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”**.

If anyone would like to support the work of Restoration of Hope this can be done via our UK registered charity, Hope in Burundi (charity number 1151062). The bank account details are as follows:

Bank: CAF Bank Ltd

Account Name: Hope in Burundi

Sort Code: 40-52-40

Account Number: 00024118

For those who would like to Gift Aid their donation, please contact Vic Ford – e-mail drvford@yahoo.com or 01283 214407 to request a Gift Aid form.