

The Fullness of Joy of the 'Wazee'

A message from Cornelia Udoka, Michael's House Care Partner, Makiungu Hospital, Singida, Tanzania

'Wazee' is the respectful word used in Kiswahili language for the elderly in Tanzania. There is a common trait that runs through all African Countries: respect for the elderly. Hence the word means more than age. It also implies wisdom as people of senior age are expected to be full of wisdom.

Despite this traditional respect given to the senior citizens in Africa, the elderly in Tanzania, like most African countries, receive no assistance from the government. Those who have family to care for them are fortunate. Those without families, must scrape out an existence by begging, trying to earn a few shillings by sewing or doing odd jobs if they are able. For others who are infirm must depend on sporadic help from others.

For the poor elderly in Makiungu, life can be a big challenge as it is a semi desert area and rain only falls four to five months out of twelve. Therefore, one has to work really hard to store enough food for the family for the period with no rain. This can be very difficult for the elderly who have a little income and a greater one for those who have nobody to care for them. Many had days when they did not eat or were unable to receive medical care.

For me, it was like a miracle several years ago when I got an email from an associate, who mentioned that there is a group called Michael's House who care for the destitute elderly. Michael's House has put a smile on the faces of the elderly poor in Makiungu because they now get food every two weeks and they can receive treatment whenever they are sick.

Each time they come for food supply, I often ask them to remember the people who are helping them but the reality came when Dennis Turner, President of Michael's House, visited [editor note: self-funded trip] Makiungu in April this year. At last they were able to see at least one face among the people who are providing help for them. It was the fullness of joy for the Wazee in Makiungu as they spontaneously began celebrating by performing the traditional Nyaturu dance.

To all the supporters of the Michael's House I say "asanteni sana," because in the Swahili language there is no better word to show the deepest gratitude and appreciation. **The destitute elderly in Makiungu join me in thanking all the donors and volunteers of Michael's House. The elderly continue to be amazed and find it hard to understand how the people of Michael's House can care about them – in one of the remotest areas of Tanzania.**

~Cornelia Udoka, Singida, Tanzania

Below: Petro Fabino pounds sunflowers to extract seeds. He will sell the seeds for a few shillings.



Above: Dennis Turner, President of Michael's House, greeting destitute elderly at hospital where food is distributed.

Below: Home of Marietta Hongwa. She is one of the few to have a bed, most elderly sleep on mats or blankets placed on the dirt floors.



Michael's House Provides Food to the Destitute Elderly in Togo

Michael's House provides food to the destitute elderly in the Togo cities of Blitta, Sotouboua and Kara, and villages of Pya-lao and Yade. The elderly living in the remote villages are hard to reach but our dedicated volunteer care partners make the trip every month because without the food the elderly would likely starve. Most are between 65 and 100 years old and were farmers. A few are still able to maintain small gardens. Many of their children have abandoned them fleeing the remote areas for work or education. Other children are deceased mainly from AIDS or daughters during childbirth.



Michael's House Supports the Indigent Elderly in Nigeria



Michael's House supports the indigent elderly living in the rural hilly area near Okpudo in Enugu state located in south central Nigeria. Because getting to these people is difficult, food deliveries are made once or twice a month.

According to the Global AgeWatch Index, Nigeria ranks 86 of 90 countries in its care of the elderly. Nigeria ranks lowest in the income security domain, with pension/government support reaching only 5% of the elderly.



The Nigerian National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), reports that more than three million aged people die annually as a result of societal neglect. The destitute in the rural areas, are particularly vulnerable as they lack food and medical care. With your help, Michael's House can save more of these elderly and make their last days free of hunger, disease, and chronic medical conditions.

Michael's House Provides Eye Care in Uganda

With your donations, Michael's House supports eye camps in Uganda. The word gets out and hundreds of elderly accompanied by their families travel (many by foot) to the eye camp location to seek treatment. In July, camps were held in Kinoni, Mbirizi, Kyasonko, Labanda, Kalangero, Makondo, and Kyazanga. The medical staff worked without breaks to see as many patients as they could. Patients with serious eye problems needing surgery then came to Kalisizo later in the month. Unfortunately, some had deep cataracts or other conditions which were untreatable. But many were able to see for the first time in many years.



Another camp was held in August at a hospital in Calisizo. Despite the heavy rain that day four hundred and fifty elderly patients with their families came seeking care. It was chaotic because of the large number needing care. It was hard for patients to even reach the registration table because of the crowd. Many were totally blind and led by a family member. Thankfully, there were many doctors and specialists who were able to see many seeking care.



Above: Patients being treated at the eye camp.

Some simply needed treatment for allergies. The specialists instructed a relative or friend how to administer the allergy drops because the elderly are usually unable to do it themselves - the drops just run down their cheeks.

In all, five had pterygiums (pink fleshy growths) removed, 100 were given glasses, and sixty had cataracts removed. It was truly life transforming for the cataract patients. Many cried with joy as they were able to see their grandchildren for the first time.



Left: Helen, our care partner and manager of the eye camps, performs screenings for those who may need care.

Right: Patients and their families gather outside the building where an eye camp is being held.



Rovina is 90+ years is in Kinoni village, had double cataracts and had not been out of her house, not even to Church for more than 10 years. She had no children and her husband died 16 years ago. Her grandnephew with his wife, who live nearby bring her food and a flask of tea once a day. He told us he has tired buying flasks and mugs etc. that Rovina continued to knock down and break.

She was educated and regretted not being able to read the newspaper; she did not even have a radio. You can imagine what pleasure she has now, reading, even going to Church on Sundays and visiting old friends. Her grandnephew can spend more time with his family and just check on her daily. She can now cook and take care of herself.



Rovina with care partner and family at a post surgery follow up visit.

Sorghum for South Sudan Project Update

Last year, we began raising money for a commercial machine to grind Sorghum, a staple grain, which is provided to the destitute elderly. Included in this project is the construction of a strong building to house the machine and store the Sorghum, and the building of a rakuba (building without walls) in Wau, South Sudan. The rakuba is needed to shelter the destitute elderly from the sun during the long process of food distribution which requires identification of each approved person who must provide his or her fingerprint to acknowledge receipt of the food.

The total cost of the project is approximately \$20,000: \$7,900 for the large building, \$8,900 for the grinding mill, and \$3,200 for the rakuba. The building and grinding mill are needed to get operational and begin feeding the people. To date, we have raised \$10,100 and construction of the large building was expected to begin in July.

In late June and early July, the civil war in South Sudan reignited with many civilians killed and stores and homes looted. The people of Wau fled, mostly to camps set-up by the United Nations (UN) and churches, while others fled into the bush for safety. There were tens of thousands of people in these camps. The situation did not get better and in late August our care partners, and most all countries pulled their humanitarian workers out of South Sudan for safety.



The UN sent more troops and the situation is better, but still not stable. However, our care partners have recently returned to Wau. The good news is that the buildings and infrastructure in Wau are mostly undamaged.

While the UN, Red Cross and other agencies continue to furnish emergency rations, attention has already turned to the future. When the civil unrest ends and life begins a return to normalcy, the need for sustained food will be great. The need to provide for the destitute elderly with no resources will be even greater.

The Sorghum for South Sudan project is now more critical than ever to save lives after the emergency relief efforts cease. At this time, we are unable to provide a projected project schedule, but we – and we hope you – remain committed to completing this project. If you would like to make a donation to the Sorghum for South Sudan project, note it in the memo field of your check or indicate when you donate electronically.

If you have any questions about the project, please see the bottom of our webpage for contact information.

Annual Meeting for Election of Trustees and Officers held on September 10, 2016

Trustee Appointments

Three year term: Deborah Halpern, Lynda Mishler, Richard McGinnis, John Lendi
Two year term: Dr. Michael Craig, Clara Isama, Felicia Pendorf, and Lucilla Akanegbu
One year term: Ann Costello, Ph.D, D.M.D, Sharon Craddock, and Dennis Tarner

Election of Officers (one year term):

President: Dennis Tarner
Vice President: Lynda Mischler
Secretary: Sharon Craddock
Treasurer: Deborah Halpren