



Empowering each other to  
Serve the destitute elderly in  
The developing world

October 2013

## POVERTY VERSUS DESTITUTION

I grew up in the Republic of Ireland in the fifties and sixties, which was a time of great social and economic depression. The great famine, which killed millions, was still in living memory. We had just come through two world wars, the rebellion of 1916 and the subsequent civil war, which led to the creation of the Republic. The new nation was struggling and so were its people. Everything was in a state of flux. Rationing as a result of WW II was still in effect and as it lessened prices were outrageous. In my small town everybody was poor. We lived from paycheck to paycheck, which was every Friday. Neighbors borrowed and shared with each other to survive the midweek lean days. My family was poor! But we were never destitute! We always had hope and friends and neighbors who were likewise poor but a community of support. I think I was in college before I realized that I had grown up poor. What has this got to do with Michael's House Inc.?

In this newsletter I would like to clarify an issue of semantics or the misunderstanding of words that I feel unintentionally, has a negative effect on our work for the aged.

When we began our mission in 2003 we identified the "poor destitute elderly" as our concern. Too frequently this has been equivocated to the "poor elderly". This is perhaps understandable because in the United States of America we are used to and exposed to the classification "poor" but rarely to the term "destitute". Without an understanding of the difference between poverty and destitution it would be difficult to understand what Michael's House is all about. Poverty does not necessarily mean destitution. One can be poor and not destitute, as is true in most cases! We understand poverty as economic inequality. It is the state of one who lacks a certain amount of material possessions or money, which creates extreme but bearable hardship. Poverty may be transitional or permanent. Maybe we were all poor at some time?

Destitution is a very different condition. Destitution refers to the deprivation of basic essential human needs which commonly includes food, water, shelter, medicine, clothing or a community support system. So as you see destitution is more extreme. You can suffer from poverty but be nowhere near destitution, and if you are destitute, you are way beyond being poor. You have basically nothing; no means of living or providing for yourself or others. I often compare destitution to someone who is trapped in a collapsed building unable to help themselves and crying out for help with nobody to hear them. They are trapped, immobilized and despairing of hope. They can do nothing to help themselves. Their cry is just a whisper. They have long abandoned their entitlement for help.

Thankfully we have collaborators from charities in the field who bring them to our attention. Their need is always immediately urgent.

Please continue to help us in our work for the destitute aged.

Michael Craig, Founder

## DESCENT TO DESTITUTION AND REDEMPTION

Anaman” is an elderly woman who lives in the remote hills of Rwanda. She, her husband and their orphan grandson moved there after the genocide. She and her husband tried their best to scratch a living from the poor land for a couple of years. Things were very difficult so her husband and then 15 year- old grandson decided with some other locals that they would make their way into Uganda to earn some money. The arrangement with a guide was that they would pool their meager resources with the assurance of work at the destination. They were aware of banditry but took the risk. Anaman never heard from them again. For a long time she disbelieved that burned and dismembered bodies found in a hole could be them. Reality eventually dawned on her. She was then not only penniless but she had absolutely no family up in the mountains. Now she was really poor! She tried to manage but unfortunately she broke her leg trying to gather some wood for a fire. With no medical care, the leg did not set properly, and now it is useless. Some poor elderly neighbors who lived further down the mountain would rattle their cans as they came within noise distance of her house to let her know that they had left a can of water for her. With the aid of one working leg and a stick for a crutch she would hobble down to get the water. Sometimes they would leave some little maize. They only came by every other day or so and then suddenly they stopped. I guess another untold desperate story lies here. At this point Anaman went from poor to destitute. I’m sure you can see the gradual decent. Because she was destitute, the Medical Missionaries requested that we pay her a pension. We were her last resort and she met our criteria for intervention. With her \$15 a month she can buy food and even pay someone to fetch her water. Through Michael’s House and your generosity she is poor again but not destitute.

## THE HELPING HANDS PROGRAM

In conjunction with Stop Hunger Now and the Notre Dame club of Maryland, Michael’s House worked with sixty volunteers on Saturday October 12 to package 10,000 meals to be sent to Burkina Faso. Dennis Turner spoke on behalf of Michael’s House.

Some of our targeted recipients are 403 marginalized elderly women accused of witchcraft in the province of Kadiogo. They are socially excluded and banished so that they are forced to leave their villages. Some of them die while looking for a place to stay. Another group of 400 includes widows, single old women or men without any support, physically disabled; blind people, etc. These people are located in the provinces of Houet and Kadiogo.



*“People say, “What is the sense of our small effort? They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time.” — Dorothy Day*

**NEWS FROM THE MEDICAL MISSIONARIES IN KIRAMBI, BHUTARE, RWANDA**

Greetings and best wishes from Kirambi. I hope and pray that this finds you well. I want to again thank you on behalf of the elderly people that you are supporting.

They are at different places far from the base and I went to visit them and take some pictures for you. This support means a lot to them. I always share with them who is supporting us to reach out to them. You need to hear the blessings they speak for all the people helping them to get this "Manna".

Some of them are already confined to their houses as this is a hilly place and they are not strong enough to climb anymore. Getting a visitor is such a blessing to them and they are always happy. Whenever they see a sister going to visit them they say it is like God. They talk and talk and share all that they want to. Some of them are just lonely. May God Bless you for this support.

God bless you.  
Sr Angela K



Maria Nyiramariza,  
82 years old

“Whenever I see you I know that there is hope and life for me and my family. “



Maria, 83 years old

“I can not believe that this food is for me...May God bless you abundantly. Now I am confirming God’s promises. “



Sinarimbizi Rosalia  
88 years old  
(couple)  
Nyaminani Straton  
100 years old

“Bringing him the food is the best thing”

**NEWS FROM ENUGU, NIGERIA**

Last summer, we received a request from The Little Sisters of the Poor in Nigeria who care for 50 old, poor and handicapped residents of which 20 need constant protections, being incontinent or completely handicapped and in wheelchairs etc. Obviously as much as possible they try to help them to keep their autonomy but for the 25 cases sited, they really need diapers to assure that they will stay dry and also so that they will not be humiliated. It is very much a question of hygiene, prevention of sores, and keeping their real dignity. Michael’s House donated funds for a start up program to provide diapers to those in need in this nursing facility. Your contributions have gone a long way to restore dignity to these elderly destitute!



**MICHAEL’S HOUSE IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THAT OUR REACH IS CONSTANTLY GROWING!!**

We now have projects in (2) Honduras (2) Ethiopia (2) Uganda (1) Rwanda (1) Togo (1) Nigeria (1) Tanzania (1) Thailand and (1) Burkina Faso

## NEWS FROM HONDURAS

Greetings from Choloma, Honduras!

Together with the staff and patients, we sincerely are grateful to you, for the encouragement and support given to us through the donation of US \$ 3,180 that was received. May the good Lord continue to bless your generosity? We will continue to keep you informed about the Project you are supporting.

Here in Casa Visitacion, the activities being carried out are; training health promoters, supporting health committees, maintaining home pharmacies and home based-care program, curative services, complimentary therapies, counselling services, strengthening support groups (i.e. women living with domestic violence and HIV/AIDS).



Sirleny (Casa Visitacion staff)  
Bringing a bed to Dona Juanita.

### **SOLAR LAMPS ... a note from one of our volunteers regarding the Christmas giving project for Michael's House. Be sure to see our holiday insert!**

"The idea is wonderful for Xmas: light transforming darkness. Articles refer to younger people and women benefiting from the solar lamps as well as providing wonderful economic opportunities for their future. How do those of you who work with the elderly in Africa see their benefit - the joy for them to live in the light and the safety and freedom that elicits? It is humbling for me to even think about what others do not have. Lord have mercy."

Anne Ackerman



**A picture is worth a thousand words! After looking through this current newsletter, you can see the evidence of the good work made possible through your donations to Michael's House. EVERY DOLLAR MAKES A DIFFERENCE! Unfortunately donations have decreased but the needs of the destitute elderly remain. Please consider the enormity of the difference you make one person to another - to those whose very existence and hope rests in our hands.**

**Your continued support makes it all possible and secures one daily meal for the elderly poor. They have come to depend on the love and generosity from those of us more fortunate on the other side of the world. We cannot let them down!**

**Donate on the web or make checks payable to: Michael's House Inc, Post Office Box 856  
Burtonsville, Maryland, 20866**

**Visit us on the web at [www.michaels-house.org](http://www.michaels-house.org)**