WORLD

Man behind the king

Common ground on abortion?

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Saving Isaac

AIDS and famine rage on, but one African orphanage learns to fight back

FROM HOPELESSNESS TO HOPE

The bad news is that so many anti-poverty projects in Africa fail. The good news is that those who learn from the past are not doomed to repeat it, as a visit to a thoughtfully designed AIDS orphanage and development project shows

by MARVIN OLASKY *in Chisamba, Zambia*

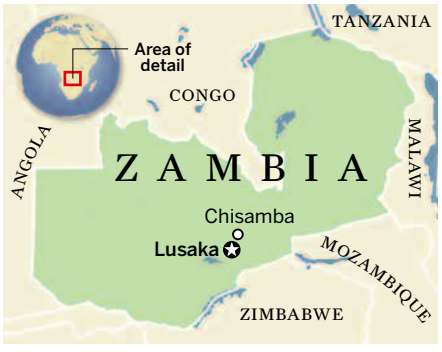
"LAND FOR THE LANDLESS": Conservation farming students put their training into practice in the fields of the Village of Hope.

DAVID VANKLINKEN

IT'S 7:15 MONDAY morning in a cement-block house near this country's major highway, the paved, two-lane Great North Road. Supervisor Peter Phiri, who worked at building that road for five years during the 1990s, is speaking to 40 employees starting their workweek in a country where AIDS, unemployment, and corruption are all rampant. They sit on planks held up by cement blocks in the building their own hands constructed, a house that will soon be home to 8-10 AIDS orphans and a widow.

Intense and energetic, Phiri tells them, "It's up to you, up to me, to choose. Pray to God to give you a right choice. Remember that without Jesus you can't accomplish anything." HIV statistics in Africa show that many have chosen wrongly. The well-documented failure of many government and big philanthropic projects shows that many would-be helpers have chosen wrongly.

But the 230-acre Village of Hope farm here, located 45 miles north of the capital city, Lusaka, is a small-scale project designed and managed by those who have gained ground-level experience in the peculiar challenges that Africa offers. The project has Africans in key positions. The pieces of employment, orphan care, agriculture, and entrepreneurship fit together so the project can be self-sustaining. The project is designed to fight the welfare mentality that has grown in Africa as the West has poured in money. If it succeeds here, it can and will be replicated.



The typical day here begins with a half-hour of call-and-response harmonic singing and Christian education provided by Zambian evangelicals such as Phiri and a local preacher, Pastor Zulu. Then some of the workers pick peanuts off plants harvested several weeks ago and left in the sun to dry. (They store the peanuts in large sacks, with dried stems used for animal feed.) Others harvest sunflower seeds, which will be turned into oil. Some paint a new orphans' house or apply mortar by a doorframe.

On some days employees clear the brush and remove the stumps from acres on which corn, soybeans, sunflowers, cassava, and peanuts will grow. Others manufacture the thousands of construction blocks (five parts sand, one part cement) that go into building 900-square-foot, three-bedroom cottages for the orphans. Some dig out 75-by-60-foot fishponds in which tilapia will grow. In plowing season some guide the oxen,

From left: Brighton, Isaac, Adam, Moses, and John

FRANCIS KAMAU • MAP: DAVID FREELAND

and others year-round pick up oxen dung to use it for compost.

Eleven of the employees, selected by a local committee, are part-time students in Village of Hope's conservation farming program. One day they had classroom training in the spacing of various plants, information they will soon put into practice in the fields. They learn business and marketing skills for managing the sale of their produce, and after they prove themselves will be able to do a lease-purchase for title deeds to their own land through a partnering program: The goal is "Land for landless orphans."

The emphasis overall is on village-level technology with no wasted resources. The wood stockpiled during the stumping of the farm goes for fires for lunchtime cooking. The goal in the fields is pinpoint use of fertilizer and drip irrigation, rather than capital-intensive and wasteful spraying and watering. A VitaGoat cycle grinder, based on a design created in the United States 30 years ago, grinds corn and soybeans through a pedal-powered system like that of a bicycle which uses adjustable-speed pulleys. Adjustable speeds can be matched to the operator's strength and the type of food, with seating adjustable to the individual's height.

Some of the operations have a Rube Goldberg quality to them. For example, to turn two kilograms of soybeans into 12 liters of soy milk: (a) Put soybeans in a funnel; (b) peddle that bicycle-like contraption hooked up to a belt and the funnel; (c) when the belt moves a grinder turns soybeans into a mash; (d) collect the mash and mix it with water; (e) through two other steps within a boiler create "superheated steam"; (f) put the mash into a pressure cooker; (g) open a valve in the boiler so the steam enters the pressure cooker; (h) put salt and sugar in a tub below the pressure cooker's spigot; (i) when the hot mash comes down and fills a bucket, solid remnants are stopped by a filter, but the liquid enters the tub; (j) stir the tub; (k) use a press to get more liquid out of the remnants; (l) use the remnants for tofu and breakfast porridge; (m) taste the delicious, sweet soy milk.

SELF-SUSTAINING: Peter Phiri (top) leads morning devotions; employees dig a fishing pond (center); and cement-block cottages house the orphans.

THE LARGER GOAL OF THE Village of Hope is not soy milk but behavior: Workers as they follow the steps and watch the pressure gauges learn diligence and responsibility. And a larger goal yet is souls. Some of the employees told their stories:

Harriet Nyirenda, 20, "became pregnant in grade nine and could not continue with my education . . . all hope was gone." But now she is learning farming and "growing as a Christian. The morning prayers and Bible studies are helping a lot. . . . I am surprised at my desire to read the Bible every day. . . . God is in control of my life. I have hope all will be well."

George Banda, 25, married with one child, had a record of failure and exploitation: "I have failed to continue with school. . . . I used to feel like a slave at my previous workplace. . . . Sometimes we worked for up to three months without pay. Here we always get paid on time. . . . The prayers and Bible study we have every morning . . . help me to live right during the day. I meditate on the word of God and not evil things."

Ireen Nankala, 18: "I was a difficult person to stay with but now God has changed me. I can't believe it: I enjoy the prayers and the Bible studies in the morning. . . . I wasn't a church girl but I always long to be at church every Sunday. . . . I still have a lot to learn to be a better Christian."

Chilala Teteta, 23: "I was fired from school in grade nine for stealing school money. I did all kinds of bad things. . . . I gave my life to Christ last year. . . . The word of God keeps on revealing more about me and helps me to see what God wants me to be."

Grace Mkazamwene, 18: "My parents died when I was young. . . . I now feel that I have a future. . . . I used to have a short hot temper . . . but now things are different, I am more patient with everyone. I have learned love."

Chisomo Shawa, 24, is married and has four children: "I like this place because it has changed my life. My life was wasting away because of beer drinking. Six months ago God helped me stop. . . . Apart from learning more about God in this place I have also acquired some skills like making interlocking blocks and concrete blocks, bricklaying and cooking."

Each of the workers is paid 8,000 *kwacha* per day: Sounds like a lot, but that's $2 (better than the standard wage of $1.70 per day). Sixty percent of the employees are orphans themselves, often supporting younger brothers and sisters. Many had never worked before, seen a television program, or traveled even as far as Lusaka, but now they will have the opportunity to gain experience in marketable skills such as manufacturing burglar bars, a hot item in crime-prone Lusaka.

The Village of Hope has two-fifths of a mile of frontage along the Great North Road, Zambia's most-used highway, so its market should attract customers. The farm store that opened June 15 has increased sales each month: in September, 4,000 pounds of potatoes and another 4,000 pounds of tomatoes, oranges, and onions combined. Sales included 112 chickens and 3,450 eggs, with a resultant 7.6 percent profit after all expenses.

TOP: SUSAN OLASKY FOR WORLD • BOTTOM TWO: AKCLI

The farm store now has a cold storage building to increase the shelf life of vegetables. With electricity now run along the road-front to the market, the next goal is a refrigerator (with a local farmer providing milk, cheese, and yogurt to sell) and a freezer for chickens. Employees regularly suggest money-making ideas, such as selling fried chicken along with fish and chips so that long-transport buses will stop. (Give bus drivers a free meal and they will.)

THE PROJECT MEASURES progress partly in terms of relationships. Little boys named Adam, Isaac (also pictured on cover), and Moses now receive care. Housemothers Miriam and Rose take care of children as they come. Directing the entire orphanage aspect are Francis and Kimberly Kamau—he's Kenyan, she's an African-American—who with their two children live in one of the cement-block homes.

Kamau, as everyone calls him, and his wife Kimberly are both 42. Kamau's father was never part of his life but his mother held on as they moved to the Nairobi slums when he was 15 and encountered "chaos, smells, utter hopelessness." He worked fixing radios and then making kerosene lamps until at 24 he made it to a Youth With a Mission training school, and then became a missionary in Moscow and Kiev. He returned from the Ukraine in 1994 to find his mother in the last stages of AIDS; she died in his arms "in a most horrible way" the day after his return.

Kimberly lived in lots of places as a child with an Air Force dad; she rebelled and for years had a life of turmoil until, anxious after reading the book of Revelation during the first Gulf War, and then reading Romans and seeing herself as a sinner, she prayed, "Lord, my way is not working, I'm ready to do it Your way now." She met Kamau while accompanying a friend on a missionary trip to Moscow in 1992; they were married in 1997, with Kamau going to work at Ministry of Caring, a Wilmington, Del., feeding program.

By 2005 they were "used to the American way of life," Kamau said: "I had a four-bedroom home. I also had my memories. I was 30 when my mother died, and years later I feel the pain. How does a 5-year-old deal with losing parents? I know what it is like to live in the slums . . . and then here comes this white man giving up his suburban life."

GOODBYE, CITY LIFE: The Kamaus (top) and the Schwartzes both gave up suburbia to live in the Village of Hope.

"This white man" is Benedict Schwartz, a Maryland software CEO who learned about the low-tech world while developing an AIDS orphans village in Namibia. Schwartz created an evangelical ministry that directs the project, All Kids Can Learn International (AKCLI), and recruited conscientious Christians like Kamau. Schwartz has now plunged in further: In July he and his family uprooted themselves from the United States and moved to the Village of Hope.

Schwartz has also hired a business-minded pastor, Emmanuel Lusumpa, to be his overall administrator. The 44-year-old Lusumpa grew up in Lusaka poverty and in 1981 "came to understand the gospel, that it's all by grace." He regularly faces government bureaucrats who believe in a different kind of grace—but AKCLI will not pay bribes. Schwartz and Lusumpa have tried to develop their own community base by networking with local village leaders, farmers, tourist lodge owners, and churches.

Schwartz realizes the need to stay in the background. As Lusumpa put it about Zambian sellers, "If they know money is coming from America, they exaggerate their prices. Once they see a white man, the price is doubled." Racial politics are also important: "When Benedict wanted to rebuff a man who was not working well, I pulled him back. The man might complain to the government that a white man is abusing him, and the government might then deport Benedict. If a person needs to be fired, I'll fire him." AKCLI (akcli.org) has a Zambian board of directors.

Seven North American churches now support the Village of Hope, and Schwartz is recruiting others to build and adopt orphan cottages on the property, to take mission trips to the farm, and to pray for the children. Two teams from the United States had a Vacation Bible School for 400 children this past summer, and two Americans taught five Zambians to be welders.

Schwartz does not want government money for the project, believing that it would hamper rather than help. To maintain one cottage of 8-10 children plus a widow caregiver costs $500 per month: His goal is one church, one cottage, including financial and prayer support. He would like to see a team from a supporting church take a mission trip every 12-18 months to visit the children and develop relationships with them. A website that will allow church members to see current photos of their kids, updated each month, is under construction.

Schwartz's challenge to Americans who have already attained wealth: "Don't think of what kind of home entertainment system or which set of golf clubs to buy. Think of lives that could be changed for the better."

"Think of lives that could be changed for the better."

AKCLI

MARVIN OLASKY

Fear God, work hard

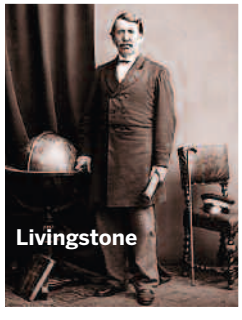
From Livingstone to Moffat to the Village of Hope

MANY MISSIONARIES AND EVANGELISTS fight disappointment. Christians celebrate revivals in which hundreds or thousands embrace Jesus, but missionary work is more often a lonely twilight struggle against principalities and powers.

The most famous 19th-century missionary, David Livingstone, was directly involved with the conversion of only one African. Livingstone missed his wife and had her join him—and she died three months later. He headed deeper into the bush without the support of Christian backers disappointed with his lack of results (WORLD, July 16 and August 6, 2005).

Livingstone's brother-in-law, John Smith Moffat, also became a missionary unable to point to big numbers of conversions. Neither gave up. Livingstone took as his life motto what he told some Scottish schoolchildren: "Fear God, and work hard." He wrote in his journal that "future missionaries will see conversions following every sermon. We prepare the way for them. May they not forget the pioneers who worked in the thick gloom, with few cheering rays except such as flow from faith in God's promises. We work for a glorious future which we are not destined to see."


Auntie Harriet


Livingstone

Is the Village of Hope (see p. 16) part of that glorious future? The project is located in the most fertile part of Zambia, where deep wells could make available the water that would allow for planting and harvesting three crops per year. Its location along the Great North Road is excellent, and it turned out that builders of the road two decades ago had used the site as a supply depot. They left behind thousands of tons of crushed stones, initially hidden in the brush and weeds, but—once discovered—ideal for constructing orphans' homes.

The spiritual climate is also promising. In 1997 Zambia, with three decades of democracy and peaceful governmental transitions behind it, declared itself a Christian nation, so proclamation of the gospel faces no legal restrictions. The country needs more trained pastors and more lifestyle changes, but with a foundation in prayer all is possible.

The Village of Hope also has a providential past. Founder Benedict Schwartz and others were returning from a disappointing land-hunting expedition in northern Zambia when they decided to stop by a farm owned by three elderly sisters known as Christians. The oldest sister, "Auntie Harriet," told Schwartz that they were grandchildren of an evangelist in Malawi who had been converted in the 19th century through the ministry of—John Smith Moffat.

Moffat had taught their grandfather, who had taught their father, who became a school administrator and church planter. The three elderly sisters wanted the Christian work of the family to continue. They wanted their land to be used for a Christian agricultural training program or an orphanage. The appearance of Schwartz, a follower of Jesus who wanted to set up both, was a godsend: Harriet told WORLD, "We were worried, and then God's people came and we were very happy. . . . Now our people can become independent, can look ahead, can discover the gifts they have."

So Moffat's supposedly unsuccessful missionary work, which built on Livingstone's supposedly unsuccessful work, was truly the gift that keeps on giving. And maybe there is something to a story told about Livingstone's meeting with a tribal chief who said the missionary could go no further until he followed the exchange custom of the tribe: The chief could choose and keep any of Livingstone's possessions, and would give Livingstone something valuable in return.

Livingstone spread out what he had—clothes, books, watch, and a goat that furnished him with milk, since his stomach problems kept him from drinking water. He was upset when the chief seized the goat and gave him in return merely a carved stick. Then one of the tribesmen explained that the gift was not a walking stick but the king's scepter. It would give Livingstone entry into every community in the land.

Livingstone involuntarily sacrificed a goat to receive a king's scepter. He voluntarily sacrificed the comforts of England so he could make great use of The King's scepter, the Bible. So do his spiritual descendants, who are now enjoying the return on his original investment that Livingstone predicted.

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