



St. Nicholas Children's Centre Kemondo (NCCK)  
Bukoba Catholic Diocese  
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*Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples,  
"I have seen the Lord!"*

Easter 2019

Dear Friends and Supporters of St. Nicholas Children's Center!

After being in Africa for twenty years I have increased my Swahili vocabulary with a new word: „*Matetekuwanga*“ – Chicken Pox! Those moved into our house in January and are taking their turn from child to child. For some children the infection passed by mildly, others had to suffer more. The scars that the chicken pox leave behind are first white on dark skin and turn dark later. Some kids looked really funny with white spots in their faces!

Since my last letter for Christmas we have received two new children:

**Monica** is eight years old and blind. When she was a toddler, she was abandoned and taken to a children's home in Mwanza. This home specializes on caring for infants and toddlers ages 0-5 years. The home tries to reunite the children with their families, finds adoptive parents for the children or takes them to other children's homes. Because of her disability it was difficult to find the right home for Monica until she finally joined our St. Nicholas family in December 2018. At first we planned to send Monica to the same school like our other two blind children Atugonza and Hadija. However, after her arrival it became apparent that Monica needs time to adjust to her new environment. It is our hope that maybe by next year she will be ready for school.





*Jessica* joined us at the beginning of February. Like our three teenage boys Sebastian, Joas and Matungwa who came to live with us a year ago, she too grew up in a nursing home and was referred to us by social services. Jessica is 13 years old and in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. She has epileptic seizures that were known at her former home but she had never received any medical treatment. Since she is with us she is taking medicine trying to control her seizures. However, the local hospitals are not equipped to examine her condition properly and we only have two different drugs to treat the seizures. So the doctors have to try different medicines and doses to find the right one. During the first weeks, I had to collect her from school several times because of her seizures. By now, the medicine is showing some effect and she is doing a lot better. Jessica is a sweet girl who quickly made friends with the other girls in our house.

*Tumaini*, who had joined us in September 2018, is finally starting to develop. His clubfeet have been treated. He now wears his special shoes at night only in order to keep his feet in the right position. Tumaini is 28 months old but his developmental age is 8 months. Just recently, he has learned to roll and turn around and to play. We do not know the cause of his delayed development. However, we are lucky to have Jara, a German physical therapist with us for a few months who is helping our kids to reach their potential.



In January, our two blind children *Hadija (9) and Atugonza (6)*, have started a boarding school for blind children in Rwanda. The school is run by Franciscan Sisters from Poland and it is excellent (see Facebook “*Educational Institute for Blind Children in Kibeho*”).



Monica, Atugonza, Hadija

It took a lot of time and effort to get all the children’s documents together for their passports applications. In the end, the passports were issued a few days before the beginning of the school year. The children also need visas in order to go to school in Rwanda. The school is 400 mi away from our house and travel time takes 15 hours because of the bad roads. The children just came home for Easter for the first time.

Before joining the school in Rwanda Hadija had gone to a boarding school in Bukoba for two years and used to come home to us skinny, scared and wetting her bed. It is a joy to see her and Atugonza coming home now well fed, healthy and happily singing songs in the Rwandan language.

Besides caring for our children at St. Nicholas we are also helping families with disabled children in our area. I saw **Mamvua** pass by our house on her way to school every day. She is 14 years old and has clubfeet. She was



Mamvua in October 2018 before the beginning of her treatment

walking on the edges of her feet. I asked her to come see me with her mother. Mamvua's mother told me that the clubfeet were treated when Mamvua was small but returned to their old position later on. This happens when there is no



after care and when the children do not have special orthopedic shoes to wear. In October 2018, we started treating Mamvua's feet.

At first both feet were put in casts which was painful and uncomfortable. Mamvua continued going to school by using a walker and a motorcycle taxi. The treatment will take many months and is costly. She had surgery on both feet already. Mamvua and her mother spend many hours waiting at the hospital for the feet to be put in casts and to see the specialist doctor. Yet, despite all of this Mamvua and her mother are always smiling and are happy about the progress.



November 2018



March 2019



David, Sadiki, Rashadu

We have three new children who attend our special kindergarten. All three children are patients in our Saturday Clinic for children with disabilities. Sadiki has epilepsy and cerebral palsy. Rashadu is four years old and has learned to walk with his artificial limb. David is four years old as well and is growing up with his disabled mother and disabled brother. All three children are being brought to us by motorcycle taxis in the morning and are taken back home in the afternoon.

We now have 44 children living at St. Nicholas. 18 children have disabilities, 19 children are above the age of 10, 11 children are going to different boarding schools. It is no surprise that our house that was built to house 25 children has become too small, especially during the school holidays when all children are home.



Our volunteers are playing with the children

Therefore, we have decided to extend our house with another building. Our teenage boys will move into this building together with a male care giver. The boys will learn to care for themselves because in another 2-3 years they will leave our house and live independently. Later on, we want to use this new building for our children with disabilities who have become adults but who will need lifelong care. To care

for a greater number of children does not only mean more space and higher living costs but also more responsibilities. Currently, I am training several people to become part of a leadership team.



Additional building

The Diocese of Bukoba has recently started their own radio channel and they have used it to advertise for our house. During lent many groups of people visit us. People brought us soap, candy and other donated goods and prayed the Stations of the Cross with us. We have also had many visitors from Germany and from the USA and are expecting many more visitors this year.



Thank you so much for your faithful support that enables us to give a home to children with and without disabilities and to give them a future!

Wishing you a blessed Holy Week and a happy feast of the Resurrection,

Stefanie Köster, children and caregivers

