

Tanzania to Virginia

News from Iris

The end of 16 months in Tanzania.

Highlights from Tanzania.

What's Next?

May 2012



Life. Love. Hospitality.

I left the US in August 2010 and returned after 16 months. This time living in Tanzania was such a rich time. I was welcomed to Tanzania by Hananasif Orphanage Centre (HOCET) and it was a privilege to work alongside them to love and serve many children and students. I am thankful for all they did to make my time in Tanzania possible. The shortest summary of my time is: *I loved a lot of people. I was loved. I learned a ton.* I built many valued relationships and got to know people who inspired me and taught me much. I was the recipient of great hospitality. I got to know the Tanzanian culture and learned to speak conversational Swahili. I am incredibly grateful for the hospitality and friendship of many people including: the Onesmo family, Jovin's family, Gabby Mwalugaja and his family, Mama Fatuma's family in Sangatini, Mzee Koba's family in Funza, the church body of DPC.

There were so many great things, but there were also many difficulties. I made many mistakes, but amidst my mistakes were a lot of valuable lessons. I learned a lot about living and working in a multi-cultural setting. I learned about hospitality, love, communication, conflict resolution, more about authority and submission, about being a servant and about pride and humility. I came back to the US in November, after wrapping up projects I was working on and realizing that the position I was in was not a good long-term fit. I am incredibly thankful my time in Tanzania and for all who helped make it possible. Thank you for all of your prayers and support. The next few pages give a good overview of my time in Tanzania and then at the end a note about what's next for me.



“A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy habitation. God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound in prosperity; but the rebellious dwells in a dry land.”

Psalm 68: 5-6



Peter



Iddy



Dorin

HOCET City Center Educational Programming

I started out my time in Tanzania focusing on building relationships and observing daily life and regular routines. Within the first few months I started focusing on after-school educational programming for the younger children at HOCET's city center. I taught math, English and basic computer skills to small groups of children in grades two through seven. Some of the children loved the extra opportunity to study English and many enjoyed checking books out of the lending library that was started. I was able to bring a lot of books and educational resources, many donated from teachers and others purchased at used book sales. The children were thrilled to learn to use computers and enjoyed the educational games. I loved working closely with the kids and it helped me improve my Swahili language skills very quickly, as most of the younger kids speak very limited English. After about six months of focusing on this project I began to transition to another focus, as desktop computers were setup with

English language learning software and a HOCET staff member was transitioning into a new role that included teaching math lessons to the children. Even after this transition, I still looked for opportunities to encourage and love the kids. The night before I left I sat around with the younger children and they went around and all said something about me. The most common themes were them thanking me for being with them, for spending time with them, and for loving them. I really feel blessed to have had the opportunity to be with these children and come to know them and to love and be loved by them.

Maendeleo Program

October 2010 was a special time at HOCET, as the first group of students (pictured to the right) finished form four and graduated from HOCET Secondary School. I worked alongside Kate Kessenich, a Kujali volunteer, to prepare a transition program that our graduates called Maendeleo, Swahili for development. There was a month of lessons that included leadership, life skills, and basic computer training. I was responsible for

the computer lessons and really enjoyed teaching our first 12 graduates computer basics and an introduction to word processing, spreadsheets, and presentations. The students were very grateful for this opportunity and many felt ahead of their peers when they went on to certificate and vocational training programs in 2011.

In addition to teaching computer skills, I personally worked one-on-one with many students and helped them as they worked through what options were available to them for continuing their education beyond form four.

Many of our students had limited options, as most did not do well on their national exams. I assisted them in investigating schools, filling out applications, making budgets, opening bank accounts, etc.



From HOCET's class of 2010 some students went on to study certificates in law, computer science, engineering, and agriculture and others went on to Advanced Level Secondary School and others entered vocational training programs.

Time in Villages

Beyond my responsibilities at HOCET and with Kujali International, I got connected to families in some villages near HOCET Secondary School. The two villages where I built the most relationships and spent the most time were Sangatini and Funza. I passed through Sangatini almost every time I made the journey from town to the school. On a very rainy day I spent more time than usual in Sangatini and was welcomed into Mama Fatuma's home as I waited for the rain to subside. They welcomed me to join them for meals that day and from that day forward, every time I passed through Sangatini I would stop to greet Mama



Fatuma and her family. Her daughters are pictured above. They also invited me to their home for the Muslim holiday of Eid Al-Fitr and I shared their holiday meal with them.

There were a few months where I spent the majority of my time at HOCET Secondary School instead of in town. While spending time at the school, I wanted to spend more time in at least one of the nearby villages. Through the village chairman, Mzee Koba, I was introduced to a teacher from Funza Primary School and was invited to help teach English at the school. The school had first through third grade as the school was only three years old. The first grade class is pictured to the right. I enjoyed spending time in this school and getting to

know some of the kids, but what I enjoyed the most is the relationships I was able to form with Mzee Koba's family. I would go once or twice a week to his house and tutor half a dozen or so children. These afternoons often started by eating lunch with the family and then children gathering around the table in the house for English lessons. In addition to teaching English, I tried to promote reading and literacy in Swahili and would bring Swahili story books for the children to read and they loved it!

Spending time in these Muslim villages and building relationships also led to honest conversations about faith and who Jesus is.



Spotlight on David



David Focus was one of our highest performing graduates on the national form four exam. I met him in 2008 and clearly remember how thankful he was to be in school. After David's father died, his uncle sent him to work in a garage at the age of 14. He worked for about two years as a mechanic and during that time he dreamed of going to secondary school, but thought it was impossible. He was incredibly thankful to HOCET for the chance to go to secondary school. I remembered this as I watched him prepare his books, uniforms and school supplies to start form five. David never thought this would be possible for him. He now plans to go to university after finishing form six. I felt so honored to play even a small role in helping make David's dreams come true. This is just one of the graduates that I was honored to know and work with in Tanzania.

“...that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” - Romans 15:6-8

“Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels.” – Hebrews 13:1-2

Gabby's Family

My first year in Tanzania I lived two doors down from HOCET's city center with other volunteers. When our year lease was ending, I started talking to a family I knew and they welcomed me to move into their home. My last three months in Tanzania I lived with Gabby Mwalugaja's family in Mbagala Kingugi, Dar es Salaam. Gabby, pictured below, worked at HOCET Secondary School and is the younger brother of the orphanage's director. I got to know his family on a long journey back from Mbeya in southern Tanzania in December 2010. They had three children when I lived with them: Noridola, Mpoki (pictured on page 1), and Frankie. They loved playing and reading with me. I was

the recipient of hospitality frequently in Tanzania, but this family's hospitality still shocked me at times. They were so welcoming and generous. We lived on the outskirts of town in a densely populated valley, where there was no access to city electricity. Gabby had installed a solar panel that provided electricity for light at night and the ability to charge phones and my computer on occasion. I loved the kids, but also really enjoyed Gabby's wife. I would visit her little shop and we would have long conversations about life, family, God, and much more. It was wonderful to be a part of their family for a time. Beyond loving their family and being so grateful for their hospitality, it was great to be surrounded by Swahili. My language skills continued to

improve as I was speaking and hearing Swahili constantly in their home and the part of town where they lived. I even began to get better at understanding Frankie's two-year-old Swahili, although his sisters had to help translate into adult Swahili at times.

I believe hospitality is a value in the Kingdom of God and living with Gabby's family and my time in Tanzania have helped me better understand hospitality and I hope I will be able to better exhibit Kingdom hospitality from here on out.



What Next?

I do apologize for the delay in sending out this final update on my time in Tanzania. The transition back to the States was more difficult than I had anticipated, but God is good. He faithfully saw me through this time of transition and reminded me of His sufficiency. I have recently relocated to Fairfax, Virginia to be close to my brothers and other family. I will be starting a full-time IT consulting job in June and will be travelling a lot within the US. I really loved living in Tanzania and know that God has given me a passion for the nations and a passion for the impoverished and marginalized. If you are wondering whether I will be going back to Africa, the answer is “Mungu akipenda.” If God wishes. I would love to be overseas and specifically in Africa again. For now I am excited to be near family and work for a time.

I am truly grateful for all the people in my life who have prayed for me and loved and supported me. I will continue to send out updates from time to time and will keep up my blog: www.followingiris.org. Please keep me in your prayers as I start my new job and build relationships and community in a new place and that I would continue to fix my eyes on Jesus.

With love,

Iris Zielske