

St. Nicholas Children's Centre Kemondo (NCKK)
Bukoba Catholic Diocese



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"Let everything grow!"

Mt. 13:24-30
(The parable of the weeds among the wheat)

August 19, 2023

Dear Friends and Supporters of St. Nicholas!

My daughters and I recently visited St. Nicholas in July. Everything grows! The children are growing up. Between December 2022 and July 2023 we welcomed six new children into our home.

During my previous visit in January 2023 the leadership team and I had discussed changes in regards to using the different existing buildings. We agreed that all the boys should move to the building that we had constructed in 2019 once the young adults who used to live there had moved out. All the girls would remain in the older main building.



The young adults visited us in July



The girls' house

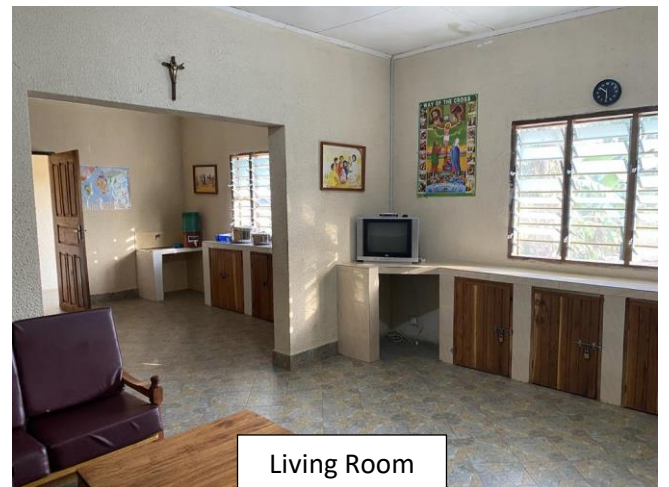
We hired more caregivers as well as additional staff for cooking and cleaning.



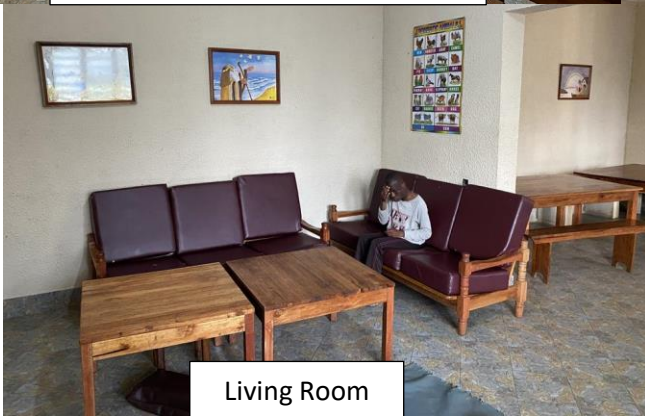
The boys' house



Dining room at the boys' house



Living Room



Living Room

The first thing I noticed when I arrived at St. Nicholas was how quiet it was. I was missing the usual noise level

although all kids were

home for the school holidays! The 23 girls and 21 boys are more spread out on the compound now than they used to be. The meals are so much quieter when only half of the gang is gathered around the table!



Boys' bedroom



Playing soccer behind the boys' house



We took our trampoline apart in Germany, put all the parts in a suitcase and reassembled everything in Tanzania!

Girls and boys are only separated in the living quarters but outside they have lots of space to play together. They take weekly turns gathering either at the boys' or the girls' living room for evening prayer. No one complained to me about the move which I take as a sign that everyone is happy with the changes we made.



The children are excited about their new trampoline!

In my last letter at Easter time I wrote about Joshua and Pelagia who both joined our family in December 2022. Both children have changed so much in the past eight months! When Joshua first came, we thought he was blind, deaf and unable to walk. At that time he was very sick and he hardly responded. In July I met a



Joshua/Gordon on the day he arrived in December 2022



Gordon has transformed into Spiderman!

completely different boy! We had given him the name Joshua since we did not know anything about him. After the child recovered he was able to tell us that his name is Gordon. He speaks the Ugandan language but he is picking up on Swahili now. He is happy, full of energy and he has made friends among the kids.

Pelagia is a happy girl as well. She has cerebral palsy. In the beginning she would crawl a lot. By now she walks freely without a walking aid. She loves to play with other kids.

And then we received John and Jason in March. The children are both three years old. Social Welfare Services transferred them from a children's home for infants to our house.





Jason und John bei ihrer Ankunft im März

The social welfare officer asked us to take the children for just one week while she would prepare the adoption papers for the children. By now the boys have been with us for five months. The social welfare officer never returned to our house although we have been calling her many times asking about her plans for the children. Personally I would be most happy for the children if they were adopted. But an adoption should take place while

the children are still small and they should not be transferred from one children's home to another during the process of adoption.



John und Jason



Vanessa with her older sister

While I was at St. Nicholas we received two girls. Vanessa is 12 years old. Her mother died of AIDS three years ago. She too is HIV positive. Although she is under treatment her health is not good. She also has epilepsy. Vanessa has been living with her older sister since her mother had passed away. So far she hardly went to school because of her poor

health. We decided to enroll her in school when the new school year starts in January 2024. Until then we will do our best to help Vanessa improve her health and to regain physical strength and energy.

Two days later we welcomed Elizabeth to our home. She is seven years old. Her mother had asked us for support.



Vanessa

She is a single mother living with her three children on one of the islands in Lake Victoria. Elizabeth has severe health issues and is physically and mentally very challenged.



Elizabeth with her mother



A caregiver feeds Elizabeth

It takes a lot of effort and time to care for her and to feed her. This is one reason why Elisabeth is in such poor health. She only weighs 17 lbs.! I was really shocked to see this little girl in such a state of malnourishment. I believe her mother has done her best caring for her for seven years. The mother had no support at all. I do hope that Elizabeth's health will improve. Children who are so challenged many times have severe health issues, are

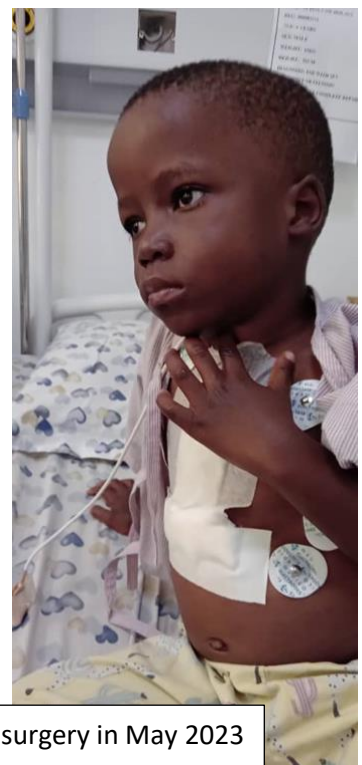
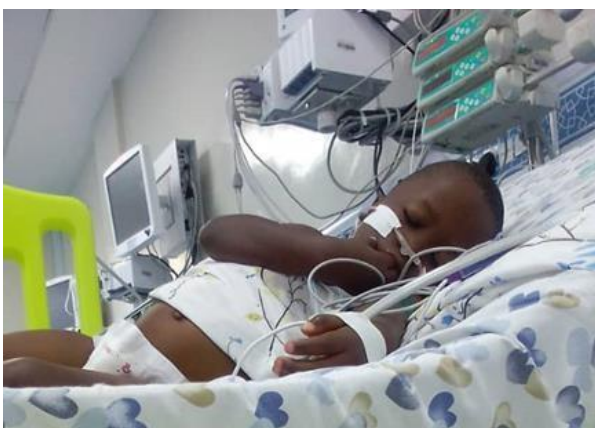
malnourished and easily catch infections. However, she understands when we talk to her and she responds with her eyes.



I am happy to share some good news with you as well. Tumaini – his name means hope – has been living with us since 2018. He is six years old. Tumaini has club feet that we have had corrected. He finally started walking at the age of four. Until then we would always carry him around. We also noticed that he was developmentally delayed and very small in size. He never had a lot of energy. The only explanation that we could find for his delayed development was that he was born prematurely. Last year a friend of mine visited St. Nicholas. When she returned from her visit she told me that she had some serious concerns about Tumaini. She had noticed that he was easily exhausted after walking a short distance and that he would break out into cold sweat. She told me that we should take him to see a cardiologist. We followed her advice and she was right: Tumaini was diagnosed with a hole in his heart! Although we had taken Tumaini to the hospital so many times over the past five years, his heart condition was never detected!

Sr. Celestina began a long journey taking Tumaini first to the government hospital in Bukoba. From there he was referred to the bigger hospital in Mwanza which is 250 miles away. Finally he was transferred to the biggest hospital in the country which is 900 miles away from St. Nicholas. In May he was fortunate to have open heart

surgery performed by an international team of specialist doctors.



Tumaini after his surgery in May 2023

The hole was closed. Tumaini recovered from his surgery. When I saw him in July I was able to see for myself that he is doing very well.

Tumaini was very fortunate that someone detected his heart condition before it became inoperable. Then he was extremely lucky that nowadays open heart surgery can be performed in Tanzania and that his name made the list of patients to have surgery performed by this international team of cardiologists. And finally his surgery was a success! This is a whole series of miracles!



Tumaini in July 2023

In July we had eight visitors from Germany. In October we are expecting two new volunteers. I am so glad that traveling is possible without any restrictions and that people visit us again. But not only people can travel to Tanzania. Travel is possible in both directions.

Joseph was one of our first children at St. Nicholas. He is 21 years old now and he has finished school. He applied for a one-year volunteer program in Germany. In order to do so he had to study German, write an application in German and pass a job interview in German done by video call. He also had to get a passport and apply for a visa.



Joseph

I am so proud of him that he applied himself and made all the steps necessary in order to achieve his goal. Joseph will begin his volunteer program on September 1st. He will be an assistant to the teachers at a special

school. During this volunteer year he will live at my place. So joining a volunteer program to help others is not a one-way-street from north to south but it is open in both directions. I hope that Joseph will learn and mature during this year just as much as the volunteers do who come to live with us at St. Nicholas.



Clara, our volunteer at St. Nicholas

Thank you so much for your prayers and faithful support and “*Karibu Tanzania*“!

Stefanie Köster, the St. Nicholas leadership team, the children and caregivers