Healing Little Hearts in Zambia

Thank you to the following partners for healing the hearts of 7 Zambian children: Rotary Clubs of Ghaziabad Greater, Nkwazi, Delhi East End, Rotary District 9210, Gift of Life Rotary District 7090, Gift of Life Albany, Gift of Life Los Angeles, Gift of Life International, Gift of Life South Asia, and African Vision of Hope.
Gift of Life International conducted our second screening mission to Zambia in August 2017. We partnered with Dr. Paul Matherne and Christine Saunders of the University of Virginia Children’s Hospital and Dr. John Musuku and his team from The University Teaching Hospital of Zambia. 7 Zambian children were selected for lifesaving heart surgery in partnership with Gift of Life India (South Asia) and African Vision of Hope. Funding for this project which would see 7 Zambian children with heart disease travel to Delhi, India for treatment at Fortis Escorts Heart Institute was made possible through a Rotary Global Grant. Logistics of the project were coordinated in a collaborative effort between Host and International Rotarians, African Vision of Hope, Gift of Life India (South Asia) and Gift of Life International.

A special thank you to Rotarian and Chair of Gift of Life South Asia, A.C. Peter Arackal, for his leadership in the coordination of the Global Grant, logistics of flights and surgeries, hosting of the families and more.
Embarking on a Journey of Hope

A total of 7 parents and children left their homes in Lusaka, Zambia in February 2018 to travel to Delhi, India with the hope that their child’s heart would be healed. A special thank you to Fortis Escorts Hospital for your partnership in providing these children with a second chance at life.

Leaving Zambia with hope for a healthy future

Arriving in India with a warm welcome from Rotarians and Gift of Life South Asia
My name is Mary Wambinji the mother to Boniface Wambinji, he was born on 21st April 2016. Boniface has four elder sisters, we came to know about his heart problem last year November when we took him for scanning at University Teaching Hospital, after we passed through different local clinics because of fever, the doctor told us that he had a hole in his heart. I became mentally disturbed when I heard this because I didn’t expect it and I thought he was going to die soon (hearing the heart). This also affected him. He couldn’t walk. Later I started receiving words of encouragement from doctors and church leaders telling me to pray and put it in God’s hands. All became well despite just the normal fever and sickness from the time he started taking his medicine they gave him at UTH.

He gets tired easily and coughs a lot at night but apart form that he is ok. My hope is that my child should be perfect. I am praying hard so that when the doctors will be operating on him, Angels will work through them and the operation will be successful and he will have a normal life.
My name is Dora Kalunde Mandanda, the aunt to Susan. Mukuka her mother is my twin sister. Susan was born on the 16th of July 2014. When she was born the doctor diagnosed her with this sickness. Her health was growing slow. Several times at night we would move because of her sickness. She would faint and her breathing rate would be abnormal. Her skin would turn blue many times. Raising her has been a challenge because her sickness comes when you least expect. We have visited and tried many hospitals and medicines to help better her condition but there is nothing we would change, except to hope in the help we received from the University Teaching Hospital.

At the hospital in 2017, they had to put her on hold giving her medicine hoping the hole would close. Up to now we don’t give her any medicine, but her situation is all the same. We were told that she needed the operation but we had no money and were just waiting for God’s intervention. We were surprised and couldn’t believe when the doctor called us and told us to come for interviews and briefings that Susan was accepted to go to India. Our first impression although was where to get the money because finding money for her medicine was a challenge for us. Then by God’s power we were blessed to hear that it was for free, and the organization was going to help us with all the necessary travelling and accommodation arrangements. It’s a blessing and our family are praying for God’s will to be done upon her life and her health to be better.

Susan
3 1/2 years old
Ventricular Septal Defect
My name is Maureen Kabwe the mother to Shadreck Kabwe. Shadreck was born on 29th March 2015. I have 3 girls and 1 brother (elder siblings). Seven months after he was born was when we discovered his heart problem. He was weak in his growth and had no power to lift or do anything. He had a high breathing rate and then his fingers and mouth turned blue when the sickness worsened. He had problems in growing. We became unable to work or look after our other children. They stopped going to school because his sickness needed our attention.

Shadreck’s father is just a simple small farmer who farms in people’s farms for survival, and me I don’t work or run any business. I am just a house wife. We can’t pay money for other school going children. We have come here several times at University Teaching Hospital from Kasama (8 hours drive). We spent k400 every trip we are here. It’s hard for my husband and I to raise such money. We have even gone into credits. When we are here, we lodge in at the hospital. It’s difficult to stay there, especially knowing you have left your other kids at home with nothing to eat. We depend on the food the hospital provides when we come to lodge at UTH. It is very much difficult to feed Shadreck and be able to keep him healthy. My prayer and hope is to see him better and have a normal life.
My name is Charity Lukaki mother of Mpundu Bwalya. Mpundu Bwalya was born 14th January 2014. They were twins and he is the oldest. He has two elder siblings – a boy and a girl. When they were one week old, I noticed he never used to breast feed as much as his other twin brother. His brother was born ok. His brother died after some months and I remained with him. I went through scanning a lot of times with Bwalya. His body many times would get swollen. I didn’t know what do. I felt like he was going to die as well after seeing my other son who was doing well died. My husband (Bwalya Mpundu’s father) left me for another woman during all the crisis until, God helped me, and Bwalya’s health became a bit better after many struggles in the hospitals and trying different medicines. He got better and at UTH they gave him medicine. The heart problem continued, but his skin stopped turning blue. It’s been 4 years up to now suffering with him. At the hospital they always tell us to buy medicine to give him. I spent k70-k80 per month for 10 days for his medicine and I spend K150 as transport for us to come to the hospital (more money for a single mother who survives through piece works for survival).

I want God to give me rest in all my struggles with Bwalya and my child to be healed for me to have peace in my life. This is my 17th time coming to Lusaka from Kabwe starting since the day the local hospital transferred us here. I have been counting. Every time I come I lodge at the hospital (University Teaching Hospital) because I feel unsecured to lodge at my sis in-laws house now because we are a burden to them. I was chased from work where I used to work as a house helper (maid) because of my child’s condition. Every time I needed to be close to him rather than my work. As a result, I used to miss work most times.. I feel blessed to be given this opportunity to travel to India, I have hopes that God will help my child get better. I know he doesn't like seeing me everyday suffering with Bwalya.

In Zambia before leaving for surgery

In India following surgery

Mpundu
4 years old
Ventricular Septal Defect
My name is Similar Makondo, the mother to Isaac Kanyama who was born on the 7th of December 2015. He is a third born in a family of three. We discovered that Isaac has a heart problem when he was four months old. From then we have been traveling from Monze to Lusaka for medication hoping that their will be change, several times but there has been no change.

I have been finding some difficulties with the finances to buy medicine and travel from Monze to Lusaka as his father does not have a permanent job. I can’t concentrate on doing other things because of his illness as it needs attention. Isaac has a leg problem and the doctors last year told us that they need to cut off his leg. He also has a big problem with his health because of the same disease. It’s really a challenge to us as parents as this is the first time to experience such sickness. I want my child to get well because I have been spending sleepless nights, hoping that one day I will wake up seeing my child’s health normal, especially when coming home from India.
Bwalo Chibebe is my name. I am the mother of Hannah Sakala. Hannah was born on 10th March 2010. She has an elder sister Ulalo Sakala. When she was two weeks old she had a fever. By then we never knew that she had a hole in her heart. We took her to the local clinic for a fever and that’s when the doctors discovered about her sickness. They treated her for the fever and it was gone and they referred us to the University Teaching Hospital for further tests and diagnosis. Since 2010 she has been treated in and out of UTH. We as a family have learned many things in the hospital through us staying with her in the hospital – how many other people suffer in life.

Most times we go for reviews and even when we are in the car she gets tired very easily. She has fatigue. Just for no reason she squats down. She doesn’t run or play with friends or even participate in any sport. After turning 3 years, the doctor after seeing the millimeter of her hole in her heart, they advised us to take her for operations either locally or internationally and we were financially unstable. We thought that it will never happen. We have been in and out of the hospital. Sometimes we have spent more than four months in the hospital looking after her.

Hannah
7 years old
Ventricular Septal Defect
My name is Liseli Mutwena. I am the aunt to Imakando Mutwena. His father is my elder brother. He was born on 27th March 2010. He has two elder sisters and one younger brother after him. He was diagnosed and found with a hole in his heart in 2016. We used just to see him getting tired easily. Even when he played with his friends, he would faint (pass out) more often. One day when he had a sore throat and we took him for treatment at the hospital. That’s when the doctors noticed about his sickness and later referred us at University Teaching Hospital.

First, we were kept at Kapiri Hospital. Then later went to Kabwe General Hospital. After staying there for months, the doctors there referred us to UTH. At first, we thought he was just a lazy boy because he liked sleeping and never used to play with friends and dozing but later we understood his conditions when the doctors explained the sickness effects to the child. Since the day we discovered of his condition, as a family we have been praying for his recovery and hoping for God to heal him. Seeing him experiencing this sickness among his friends is never normal to us. We want him to lead a normal life like the rest of his siblings. We are happy that there are organizations like African Vision of Hope, Rotary and Gift of Life to help this reality come true, especially to parents that can’t afford to take their children to India. You are really giving life back to our children.
Preparing to Head Home with Healthy Hearts
Providing HOPE to Zambian children with heart disease

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