



Helping Orphans and Vulnerable Children
Be Secure • Be Healthy • Be Connected • Be Prepared

**Urukundo “Love” Working Group, Cyeya; Rukomo District, Rwanda
2016-2018 shared partnership with
The Brand Family, St. Luke’s UMC, Florida, and an anonymous donor**

On the following page is the list of names recorded by our ZOE program facilitator/social worker during group formation. The names in bold are heads of household, followed by their siblings and dependents. Although ZOE obtains name lists with both first and last names, ZOE uses first names only in public lists to preserve the privacy of children in the program.

The ages of the orphaned and vulnerable children in the ZOE program range between infant and college age; however, the youth who is the head of household must be old enough to manage a small business and so is usually between the ages of 14 and 21. Some of the children live with an elderly grandparent or caregiver who is disabled or otherwise unable to care for the children. It is often the case that such arrangements include shelter only and the caregiver is unable to provide food, education, health care or other support which children need. Child rights is especially important in such situations so that the children are not abused.

Please note, children joining the ZOE program are living in extreme poverty situations. Often they have no parents or birth documentation and have suffered multiple traumas in their young lives. Occasionally the children give conflicting information on their names and ages. Additional orphans are frequently adopted by the group, and a small percentage of children will leave the group due to family reunification or other reasons. ZOE strives to keep the list as up-to-date as possible. All the names on this list represent real children in need of your prayers.

Urukundo Working Group, Rwanda

21 households and a total of 85 children



Rachel 21

Soline 17
Vumilia 12

Regine 20

Pascaline 18
Cécile 15

Salomon 21

Josiane 20
Divine 18
Angelique 16

Sandrine 17

Gisèle 7
Francine 4
Denys 1

Seraphine 20

Fabiola 5

Sandrine 14

Rosine 12
Jeanne d'Arc 10
Janvier 7

Liliane 5

Yvonne 2

Sophie 18

Nadia 9

Valentine 21

Claudine 18
Confiance 5
Esther 2

Barinabo 18

Esperance 15
Ildephonse 13
Lambert 10
Niyomukiza 1

Barinabo 19

Mukandayisenga 12

Olive 21

Donatha 20
Donatien 15
Anitha 10
Domotille 8

Valentine 20

Jeannette 18
Betty 16
Fiston 14
Samuel 10

Mugabarigira 16

Richard 14
Samuel 12
Patrick 10
Gilbert 6
Solange 2

Vestine 19

Clarisse 18
Olive 16
Marie Grâce 14
Albert 13
Diane 10
Fillette 4

Josiane 22

Nsengimana 20
Sandrine 12

Olive 19

Sophie 20

Ratifa 16

Emmanuel 14
Immaculée 12
Charlotte 10
Evariste 8

Solange 16

Félix 12
Julienne 9
Aline 7

Théogène 17

Diane 15
Valens 13
Evariste 11

Théoneste 21

Jean Baptiste 17
Jacqueline 20
Yves 12

Hagenimana 20

Uwiringiyimana 17
Nsabimana 15
Habumuremyi 10
Nambajimana 8

From the trip leader's notes taken during a ZOE Trip of Hope to Rwanda, July 2016

Thursday, July 14 Rukomo District New Groups

We traveled from Kigali to Rukomo district. This was a long trip to a very remote area. Epiphanie shared that no other NGOs come to this area because it is difficult to get to. Here we met with a large combined group of new ZOE orphans. There were twelve groups which included 434 households and a total of 1302 orphaned or vulnerable children. All of the groups were represented at the meeting. Not all members were able to attend because of the distance and some were in school. Some walked for 1 to 2 hours to get to the district office where the meeting was held. We were surprised to find that the children were so clean and well dressed. Epiphanie shared that this was a requirement for visiting the district office. Most of the children had borrowed or even rented clothes from others to wear.

This was one of their first meetings with ZOE and they had spent the morning learning about developing a dream sheet. A representative of each group shared their dream sheet with the entire assembly. We arrived in time to see two of the orphans share their dream sheets.



Marceline is a part of the Unity Group.

- *What happens in your community that you don't like?* Abuse of children, wicked women, dropping out of school
- *What makes you sad?* Father has been in prison for a long time, members of her family have died, father repeatedly beat her
- *What makes you feel happy?* Mathematics at school, babies, being in church where she can tell all of her sorrows to God
- *What is your dream for the future?* Wanted to be a nurse but was unable to complete school. Plans to donate blood. Wants to ride in a car. Main goal is to have a proper home.
- *What will be your guiding principles toward fulfilling your dream?* Self-confidence, time management, and commitment



[Unidentified]

- *What happens in your community that you don't like?* People who make me sad
- *What makes you sad?* Death of mother at 8 months old
- *What makes you feel happy?* Eating pineapple, attending church, the word of God
- *What is your dream for the future?* To buy a bicycle, to buy new iron sheets to re-roof his house, to have enough to eat
- *What will be your guiding principles toward fulfilling your dream?* Pray to God because he can do all things, saving, hard work



Alice, the ZOE social worker for the groups also shared her dream sheet.

- *What happens in your community that you don't like?* Children being abused
- *What makes you sad?* Alice was 15 years old at the time of the genocide. She lost five family members, including her parents. One brother and one sister survived.
- *What makes you feel happy?* Music. She likes to listen to music and sings in a choir.
- *What is your dream for the future?* She wants to be able to farm her family's land and continue her education.
- *What will be your guiding principles?* Saving

The children were encouraged not to put their dream sheets in a drawer but to look at them every day. They will be updated. The dream sheet will help them to stay focused and can be used as a tool for self-evaluation and motivation. They were encouraged to pray about their dreams.

Following the training regarding development of the Dream Sheet, a number of the ZOE children shared their stories with us.

Patrice is 20 years old. She cares for 7 siblings and her 2 month old daughter. We all fell in love with little Emily. As Patrice began to tell her story, she became very emotional and our hearts were broken for her. Patrice lost both her parents. She lived with her grandmother until she died. Their house collapsed and they became homeless. She was in secondary school when she had to drop out. She began working for food. After about 1 month she was raped by her employer and became pregnant. During her pregnancy, she was too weak to work. Now they survive by begging. They are starving and have no shelter. She feels bad that the baby does not get enough milk because of her lack of food. She walks an hour to come here to the meetings.



Dativa is 16 years old. She has lost both parents. She cares for two young sisters and a 15 year old brother. There is also an older brother that they lived with until he married and there was conflict with the sister-in-law. She has been working for food since she was 7 years old. She has been head of household since she was 8 years old. There is not much work for food in the dry season. All have had to drop out of school because they were struggling for food. They sometimes eat leftovers from sorghum beer production. She dreams of running a business; of selling food because they are so hungry.



Beatrice lost both of her parents in the third year of high school and had to drop out. She has 6 siblings. She is the oldest sister. Beatrice has been raped and has a child. "I have to provide everything for them, yet I have nothing." She begs or works for food. Their home is partially collapsed. They cannot sleep when it rains for fear that the house may come down on them. They need a place to stay because it is difficult to work with no home. They have no land. It is hard to discipline her siblings because they judge her for having the baby. They eat whatever they can find, usually 3 meals per week.

Regina is 18 years old and has 9 siblings. The children were hosted by a relative where she was repeatedly raped by two boys. She became pregnant and does not know which of them is the father. The baby is now 1 ½ years old. Because of her small stature, she had a cesarean section which resulted in an infection. They must beg for food and cannot afford medical care. She and all but one of her siblings have dropped out of school due to inability to pay school fees. He borrows school books. Their house is collapsing. "I have hope because at least people can sit down and listen to me."



Delphine is 19 years old. She cares for 5 siblings. After the death of her parents, the children lived with their grandfather until he died as well. She had to drop out of school when she was in the third year of high school. She went to work as a housekeeper. She was raped by her boss and became pregnant. Then she was chased out by the wife. That child is now 15 months old. They also eat waste from sorghum drink production. She has little milk for the baby due to lack of food. She wishes for sorghum flour to feed the baby. She cannot pay for health insurance. The baby's father does not help. She prays that by God's mercy they will survive.



Everest is an illegitimate boy. His mother has mental illness. She was 17 when he was born. His father left before he was born and he has never met him. Because of her mental illness his mother was sexually abused by many men and she was unable to care for him. He was raised by his grandmother. She died when he was 15 years old and in Primary 6. He continued to secondary school but it was very hard because he had to do labor and fetched water for food. Because of these hardships, he failed Secondary 3 and dropped out. He would beg or steal food to survive. Everest met other street kids and began



to abuse drugs and alcohol to forget that he was helpless and alone. He is stigmatized because of his illegitimacy. Neighbors tell him to go and find his father. "It shocks me to see my mother in the street and know that she does not care for me." A friend lent him clothes to put on to come here today.



Immaculate is 19 years old. There are 9 in her family. She is called rubbish, like an animal, not even human. Her mother was married to the father of the oldest child. He died. Each of the other children has a different father. Her mother abandoned them and they do not know where she is. She is able to earn about 2 kgs of beans per month. Other times they may eat cassava or sweet potatoes. They stay somewhere different every night, sometimes sleeping under banana trees. They have no land, no money, and own nothing. They survive by God's grace. She wishes for one room for them to sleep in. She wants her siblings back in school. She borrowed clothes for the meeting today.

One important aspect of the ZOE program is trauma healing. Being able to share their stories with one another and to know that they are not alone is an avenue to begin healing. It was so very difficult to hear the stories that these young people shared and be unable to do anything to relieve their suffering immediately. Next week they will have teaching on income generation and starting businesses. Their journey out of poverty and hopelessness has begun and their stories will remain with us always.

Focus on: Faith

Often the isolation that the children feel when they begin the ZOE program extends to their thoughts about God. Because they are abused and discriminated against by their community - and often this includes Christians in their village - they believe God has also abandoned or even cursed them. At other times they believe that maybe God does not exist, or if God does exist that they are somehow beyond God's love. In the very first meeting the staff often address the Lord's prayer with the children, and talk about what it means, as an orphan, to call God "Father." They learn that they are not truly orphans because they have their heavenly Father who loves them.

ZOE shares the gospel with these children, but this sharing goes beyond words to deeds. The children both hear and see the very best of the Christian message, and often respond to this in inspirational ways. At each meeting they begin with Scripture readings, prayer and devotions given by a group member, but while this is available to the children they are never coerced into the Christian faith. ZOE's program is religiously non-restrictive, but offers a compelling view of the love Christians show to others.

One of the most powerful parts of the empowerment program is the way these children put their faith into action in their own community. They forgive those who have harmed them; feed others who are even poorer than themselves; adopt other children and share their resources and knowledge with them; pray and care for one another; and pay fair wages to those who had once taken advantage of their situation with hard labor and poor pay. These children return good for evil and can be examples to all of what it means to live our faith.

Focus on: First Connections

One of the biggest disadvantages orphans and vulnerable children face is isolation from peers and the larger community. Struggling on their own, the children lack moral support, access to community resources, and a network of people to help them progress and face challenges. ZOE creates connections.

Peer group. Even though there may be hundreds of orphans and vulnerable children living in a community or village, they often self-segregate because of the conditions of their poverty, disease, and/or the stigma of HIV/AIDS. When each new member tells their story during the first working group meeting, they are greatly encouraged to find that there are others who share their same struggles. Then ZOE introduces the children to young people who already graduated from or have made significant progress through ZOE's empowerment program and the new ZOE participants are inspired and energized to begin the work of transformation.

Program facilitator and mentor. Each working group is assigned a program facilitator/social worker. These ZOE staff members usually speak the mother tongue of the region, hold a diploma in social work or related fields and have experience working with children. Additionally, the working group members select a person from the local community to serve as a mentor and advocate for the children within the community. Mentors receive training from ZOE and then attend weekly meetings, make home visits and help ZOE resolve challenges the group may face in the community.

And a powerful connection is you! All ZOE working groups know the opportunities they receive are from God, through the love and concern coming from their partners far away. They are amazed that you would care for them without ever having met them. This powerful connection is further strengthened when a Hope Companion visits the children to witness what they have achieved. In many ways you stand in place of their parents, and to hear that you are proud of what they have accomplished is transformative for these children. Thank you for being a part of building God's Kingdom in this way.