

Stories from the field

how A Child's Hope International is making a difference

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*Hands Against Hunger*TM How One Church is Reviving a Dying Country

The AIDS pandemic has been ravaging Swaziland for decades. As recently as 2015, it was thought that this country, about the size of New Jersey, would become the first nation in history to become almost extinct because of the disease.

Many moms and dads in their most productive years—30-40—have been greatly affected by the AIDS epidemic and most children have been impacted by losing one or more direct or indirect relatives.

Of the 1 million people in Swaziland in 2015, half were under 15 years old; 40% of the children suffered from malnutrition; and 4,000 infants were being infected with HIV/AIDS every year. Left in the wake of disease and poverty are approximately 120,000 orphans.

Though these statistics are heartbreaking, *hope is rising*...

In 2006, during a live simulcast of the Global Leadership Summit in Ohio, Reverend Stan Tharp, senior pastor of Christian Life Center (CLC) in Dayton, Ohio was convicted as Irish Rock Band U2's Lead Singer Bono asked, "Where's the Church in response to poverty and AIDS that are devastating Africa?"

This question haunted Tharp. One day, God would hold him accountable for how he responded to helping those in need. He could not allow his church to stand on the sidelines. CLC needed to get in the game.

Expectantly, Pastor Stan laid out criteria that would help determine in which country his church would serve. Poverty. AIDS. Political stability. A country small enough so they could see the impact they were making...



It wasn't long before Swaziland became the clear call.

Just a year later, in December 2007, the pastor and six of his church members took their inaugural trip to Africa. The group returned from their nine day journey with hearts broken for the Swazi people, yet hopeful that CLC, a church of about 2,500, could make a difference.

While there, God divinely connected the team with Pastor Kevin Ward, a strategic thinker who leads Challenge Ministries in Swaziland. Ward was convinced that giving

people a handout was causing more harm than good because it kept them dependent on others instead of teaching them how to help meet their own needs. As a result, he established the "In Community, By Community" (ICBC) ministry model. This is a holistic model built on sustainability—encouraging and

empowering people to use the gifts God has given them, under the guidance of the local church, to help meet the needs of their community.

In 2008, as CLC Dayton was launching its ministry in Swaziland, it became evident that there was a desperate need for a nutritious food source. Years of flooding and drought had caused high prices and food shortages, while disease and unorganized food management programs adversely affected the poverty rate. The Swazis became sick easily because they didn't have basic foods to help fight off infection, and their medications weren't always effective in warding off sickness and disease because they needed to be taken with food.

In God's providence, a CLC member connected his church with Larry Bergeron, the executive director of A Child's Hope International (ACHI), a Christian non-profit headquartered in Cincinnati, OH, which serves orphans and vulnerable children.



The rest is history in the making...

ACHI's Hands Against Hunger™ program distributes Hope Boxes™ that contain high protein meals, water purification supplies, and Christian literature to people in need. Packing events are held regularly at their Hope Factory™ and other satellite locations, such as CLC Dayton, where volunteers assemble meals that contain vitamins, minerals, dehydrated vegetables, soy protein, and whole grain rice. This “super rice,” as it is fondly referred to by the Swazi people, can help reverse the effects of malnutrition, restore health, improve physical stature, and increase mental alertness in children at a cost of only \$.25 per child per day!

CLC Dayton's annual Hands Against Hunger™ event is a highlight of their year because no special skills are required to participate. This allows youngsters and seniors to work alongside their family and friends to make a difference. Since this is such a large feat, it also rallies the community to work together towards a greater cause. In 2017, 10% of the 1,700 volunteers who assembled 600,000 high protein meals at CLC were from outside of the church.



At each event, meals are packed to fill one or two shipping containers of 300,000 meals each. To cover shipping costs, the church has intentionally allocated money from their Outreach Fund, besides receiving monies from individuals and specific fundraisers, such as Rides for Rice.

Since 2008, ACHI has distributed over 30 million high protein meals and provided supplies to purify 5 million gallons of water! Of the nine million meals shipped to Swaziland, 2.7 million were packed at the CLC campus.



High protein meals distributed in communities that CLC sponsors are primarily given to orphans and pre-schoolers, as well as those with significant health risks who are unable to take AIDS medications for lack of food. Most other community members receive meals in exchange for work they do for the local church. This exchange encourages those served to use their gifts and talents to contribute to the needs of the community. They become hopeful as they see change taking place and realize they can personally affect it.

It has been a humbling experience for church members to visit homesteads and hand high protein meals to “go-gos” (grandmothers who care for orphans). “It’s easy to

know intuitively or intellectually what you’re accomplishing,” said Christina Clark, who oversees CLC’s Hands Against Hunger™ events, “but to give this food to someone and see tears in their eyes when they receive it, gives you a whole different perspective.”



Clair Oates, Challenge Ministries’ nurse, sees the difference “super rice” is making in the lives of those being reached. “These high protein meals are an invaluable source of nutrition and provide everything the Swazi people need from a health point of view. They come back to the clinic feeling better because of the food they have been given.”

ACHI Hope Boxes™ are playing a key role in helping to change the trajectory of Swaziland. AIDS and hunger are being combated. Fewer people are dying. Orphans are receiving care. The people are being empowered and taking ownership. Disciples are being made. Christian leaders are being raised up and God is being glorified.

Hope is rising...

In December, CLC Dayton celebrated ten years of ministry in Swaziland. Over that time, this church, amazingly, has funded ten ICBC’s and ministered in various other ways that have impacted the lives of approximately 5,000 people.

“I recommend every church partner with A Child’s Hope Int’l,” said Pastor Stan. “We here in the U.S. can save people from starving for pennies a day, but we don’t. I don’t want to stand before a heavenly Father who loves those kids as much as our kids and tell Him why we didn’t bother.”

To learn how your organization can get into the game and have a life-saving impact on starving children, contact A Child’s Hope Int’l at the number below or visit our website.



As a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, the mission of A Child’s Hope Int’l is to motivate and mobilize the church and community to care for orphans and vulnerable children through adoption, foster care, orphan care, and humanitarian relief. As advocates for the least of these, our programs reach thousands of children worldwide.

We exist because the children are waiting™.

A CHILD’S HOPE INT’L

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