



MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF REFUGEES | MAY 2023

**Happy are those
whose help is the
God of Jacob, whose
hope is in the Lord
their God, who made
heaven and earth, the
sea, and all that is in
them; who keeps faith
forever; who executes
justice for the
oppressed; who gives
food to the hungry.
Psalm 146:5-7**



Jean Mugisha is now an Impact Hope university student studying Software Engineering at Adventist University of Central Africa (AUCA).

“Hunger Pains Much”

By Joan Oksenholt

Jean Mugisha’s family lived in the Democratic Republic of Congo for generations until the rebels came for his family. His dad ran in one direction, and his mother, carrying her toddler son Alphonse on her back and her baby, Theophile, across her chest, fled the opposite way. The rebels chased her through the forest. When she could hear them getting close, she slid down the bank into the river and crouched under the water to hide. As soon as it was safe, she stood up and realized her baby wasn’t breathing. She had to bury Theophile by the river before she could continue running to safety in Rwanda. Jean was born in a tent in a refugee camp. His earliest memory is hearing his baby sister crying for food inside the family’s tent while

he was outside guarding it. He was five years old. “Life was terrible during those days,” Jean says. “All of us suffered. There wasn’t enough food, and many people were sick because the camp water wasn’t clean and sanitation was bad. I had to guard our tent because thieves would take our food and everything we had.”

Eventually, his family moved into a small house made of mud and dung in the Kiziba camp. His dad found a job herding cows far away from the camp, and he wasn’t able to see his family often. His mother, sick and depressed, was frequently unable to find food for her children. It was then that Jean experienced hunger many times. “Hunger pains much.” (*Cont’d Inside*)

“It wasn’t easy to sleep because of hunger...It was hard to focus on anything except the need to eat. Then my whole body was in pain—even my eyes and throat. The only thing to do in that stage was to curl up and try to sleep. There was not energy for anything else.”

(Continued from front page) Jean told me. “We never had enough food, and many times we wouldn’t have anything to eat for days.” He described how he felt during those times. “The first day I was hungry but waited patiently for food. It wasn’t easy to sleep because of hunger. The next day, everything began to look blurry, and I felt too dizzy to go to school. It was hard to focus on anything except the need to eat. Then my whole body was in pain - even my eyes and throat. The only thing to do at that stage was to curl up and try to sleep. There was no energy for anything else.” Their neighbor, recognizing the signs of extreme hunger, sometimes gave Jean food. He’d divide the food in half and share it with his little sister. Everything was better when his dad came to see the family - he made sure his children had at least a little food to eat. His dad was his hero, and Jean followed him everywhere, talking and asking questions. “He was the best dad!” Jean says. “He took us to church, he taught me math and French, and he taught us to love and respect everyone.” His dad died when he was fifteen. Jean and his siblings cherish the memory of their dad’s love for Jesus and his family.



Jean Mugisha (front left) with Joan Oksenholt and family in the refugee camp.

Jean loved to learn and he read all the books in the school library in one year - more than 300 of them! His seventh-grade physics teacher called him Einstein because of his intelligence and eagerness to learn. The nickname caught on with both teachers and students, and now he is called Einstein by his family and friends. The school in Kiziba goes through grade nine; no education is available after that. Impact Home came to Kiziba in 2016, and Jean rejoiced when he was accepted to Rwankeri Adventist high school for his sophomore year. After graduation, he taught junior high physics to Kiziba students. I visited one of his classes - he was an excellent teacher, and his students were motivated to learn. He was one of the first students chosen by Impact Hope to attend the Adventist University of Central Africa, where he studies Software Engineering and likes to help his friends in every way that he can.



Jean with Mindy Thygeson, co-founder of Impact Hope.

Jean says that his childhood was spent living the hard life of a refugee in the camps. “The books I read gave me most of the knowledge I had about the world I lived in. I wanted

to live a better life outside the camp. When I felt hopeless, I ran to the church to cry and pray for God to help me.” One of his favorite Bible verses is Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jean believes that God sent Impact Hope in answer to his prayers, “Impact Hope changed the path of my life. The sponsors gave me the great gift of Christian education. That gift has given my family and I hope and a beautiful future. The blessings I’ve received are more than I ever dreamed of. My goal is to share those blessings and help others in every way that I can. Thank you, Impact Hope!”



My Mom is the Champion of My Heart

By Bosco, Impact Hope Graduate

Proverbs 31:29-31 describes my mother’s character well. “Her children arise and call her blessed...many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.”

My mom is the champion of my heart, a heroine who helps me in all my challenges. She encourages me in everything I do. She is a woman of prayer who prays for me every day.

It’s not easy to live in a refugee camp. There’s never enough of anything, especially food. There were many times when my mom had nothing to eat because she gave her food to her children. When I wanted to drop out of school because I was hungry, my mom prayed with me, hugged me, and

inspired me to keep going.

Our lives in the DRC were really good until the rebels came for us. I was separated from my family for several days when we had to flee our home. I’ll always remember my mother’s tears of joy when my parents finally found me in the camp. Rebels killed my oldest brother in Congo. Our lives were heavy with grief for a long time, but my mom continued her loving care for all of us. She’s a leader in our church - a true witness for Jesus in everything she does. She nurses us when we’re sick, helps us with our laundry, and listens to each of her seven children when they’re sad and need to talk.

Despite our poor living

conditions, my mom sings and laughs with us so we can have a happy home. She blesses us with her love for Jesus; our family will always be wrapped in her love. She gives us hope and joy. My mom is a wonderful mother; I love her very much!



Bosco (center) with his mother, father and siblings in the refugee camp.

World Refugee Day

Mark your calendar's for June 20, 2023 as we celebrate World Refugee Day. Stay tuned for more details!



YOU helped Impact Hope Girls Receive Pad Kits!

You helped provide confidence and freedom in the form of reusable pad kits that will be distributed to all the girls in the Impact Hope program. That is nearly 400 ladies! Not only did we reach our goal on International Women's Day, but we exceeded it! Thank you for your generous hearts and your support of young refugee girls.

1st Generation Impact Hope Student on 3ABN

Jimmy was among the first refugees selected to join the Impact Hope sponsorship program. He now lives and works in the United States. Watch Jimmy and Liz Thomsen, Impact Hope Executive Director, on this special 3ABN episode.



Scan the QR code or visit the Impact Hope Youtube channel to view.



Student Words to their Sponsor

I am the luckiest person to have this opportunity to go to this Christian school. I have learned how to pray and I get to participate in many activities! My sponsor, I want to thank you for caring for me even though we've never met. I appreciate all that you do for me.

-Gentile, Senior Student



Three Ways You Can Make an Impact

SPONSOR A STUDENT

\$50 a month goes to providing a safe education at a Christian boarding school, medical coverage, and all living essentials.

DONATE

Whether you make a monthly donation or a one time donation, 100% of gifts goes directly to the mission.

SHARE THE STORY

Invite your community to get involved. Give a church presentation, host a dinner party, or send out an email sharing why you support these young refugees!

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