

Rich Tarro, Kenya – Summer 2021

Light for Mwanahamisi's mud hut



Mwanahamisi, Ali and Halima

The primary goal of my HOPE Project is to give the children we serve educational opportunities to which they would not otherwise have access. The only way for them to break the cycle of poverty is to develop job skills so they can earn more money, through higher paying jobs, to live and support their families.

At the same time, we also do our best to help the families of our students address their everyday struggles. While education is the primary focus of my HOPE ministry, education doesn't mean much when a family does not have food to eat. We continue to give out food to 50 needy families each month, but the needs of our families far surpass the assistance we can provide.

Many of our HOPE families live in one-room shacks made from corrugated iron sheets, and others live in houses whose walls are constructed entirely of mud. Many of these structures have no electricity, and these families are therefore literally in the dark once the sun goes down. Kerosene for lighting is a luxury most cannot afford. To help address this lack of electricity, in at least some small way, we supplied solar lanterns to 100 HOPE families. The hope was that the solar lamps would provide some means of lighting their one-room dwellings for those who have no other means to do so.

One of our HOPE students who benefited from a solar lantern is Mwanahamisi. Mwanahamisi and her older sister live in a tiny one-room mud house with no electricity or running water. It's very dark inside the house, even during the day, since there are no windows in the structure. There is also very little ventilation. However, being without light at night is not the worst of Mwanahamisi's struggles.

Mwanahamisi is 16 years old and just finished primary school in March. Her favorite subject in school was social studies. She is very sociable and funny and likes skipping rope. Mwanahamisi did not perform well in school, which is not surprising given her home environment and the responsibilities she had placed on her as a young girl while trying to study and attend school. Mwanahamisi wants to learn hairdressing, and we are currently working to place and support her in this endeavor.

Mwanahamisi's father passed away when she was barely 3 years old. Her mother died when she was 7. Mwanahamisi doesn't remember her father at all, but she remembers how her hardworking mother used to sell vegetables to earn money for the family to survive. Mwanahamisi remembers these as times when life was better for her.

Mwanahamisi's older sister, Halima, with whom she lives, is 30 years old and has intellectual disabilities. Despite not being an adult herself, Mwanahamisi is Halima's primary caregiver.

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Mwanahamisi at home, holding her new solar lamp.

Mwanahamisi’s older brother Ali, who is recently married, helps Mwanahamisi and Halima with basic needs. However, as Ali works construction and only earns the equivalent of a little over \$4 a day when he can find work — which is many times just one day week or not at all — there is not a lot to go around. Mwanahamisi and Halima have to get by on what little Ali can provide them.

In the best of times, the mud walls of the house have gaps and the building is weak. During rainy seasons, the mud walls collapse and then need to be rebuilt, which only happens when they can get people to help them rebuild the collapsed walls. We visited Mwanahamisi’s house to bring her a solar lamp. What we saw horrified us. The house is pretty much in ruins. No one should live like this.

We are trying to raise money to build a more stable structure for Mwanahamisi and Halima to live. However, like most things in Kenya, nothing is that easy. In addition to raising money to finance the construction, we have to worry about other family members attempting to claim rights to a refurbished house. We are working with the proper authorities to ensure the protection of Mwanahamisi and Halima’s ability to reside in a new structure.

In spite of all their struggles, Mwanahamisi and Ali were so appreciative of the solar lantern given to them by the HOPE Project. Halima used to make a lot of noise at night because of the total darkness, but she now no longer does. The solar lantern also helped Mwanahamisi with her school work once it got dark.

I’m in awe of how this family finds joy in a small thing like a solar lantern, in the midst of so much adversity. I only wish that I could say that I were that far along in my own spiritual journey. When I find myself complaining about all the things I want to change, I pray that our Lord will make me more like this family in appreciating the many gifts that He provides.

The solar lanterns seem like such a small thing, but they make a huge difference in the lives of our HOPE families, who have next to nothing. We are always looking for more ways to help our students and their families, like Mwanahamisi’s.

Thank you for your continuing generosity, which makes what we do possible!

Peace, Rich

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No one should live like this.

Please consider supporting our work at HOPE Project — or a special gift to help us provide Mwanahamisi and Halima with a suitable place to live. Read more about HOPE Project at mklm.org/tag/rich-tarro/

To donate by MAIL, please return the bottom portion of this letter with your payment in the provided envelope.

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Thank you very much for your generosity!

----- TEAR -----

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