

**HD Charitable Work From Start to Finnish**

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Oct 02, 2014 (The Herald/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- It all started in a chance meeting in 1992. Seppo Ainamo, a Finnish national, was working as an entrepreneurship development proponent and had attended a show by Boterekwa Dance Troupe. It was then that Ainamo saw a seven-year-old playing on his own while his mother was performing with the troupe. The sight of the boy, who could have been in school, was enough for Ainamo who decided that he must take responsibility and adopt the boy for his school requirements.

Today, Ainamo and his wife Oili Wuolle lead the Dzikwa Trust which has seen hundreds of children from the dusty, red soils of Dzivaresekwa realise their dreams of getting a formal education while some of the beneficiaries have completed their tertiary education.

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Some of the beneficiaries are also leading various institutions in Zimbabwe.

"Everything started by mistake as I remember seeing this little boy playing, virtually loitering in the grounds while his mother was performing for the **group**.

"The 22-year-old mother said she had two sons.

"The boy Patson Dzimunwe, was attending Dzivaresekwa 4 Primary School but the mother was struggling to pay fees for her sons," Ainamo said during a recent visit to Dzikwa Trust offices in the heart of Dzivaresekwa.

Dzimunwe, now a man, works for the Government and is based in Bulawayo.

Yet the story of Dzikwa continues.

Supported by the Zimbabwe Aids Orphans Society, operating mainly from Finland, which is responsible for fundraising and the implementing Dzikwa Trust Fund, Dzikwa works with families in Finland who support each child with education while the children receive a daily meal since 1993, health care, IT tuition and extra lessons. An activities centre has also been set up for the children.

The Trust pays all fees and levies for the children including uniforms, shoes, textbooks and all school needs while it also facilitates the acquisition of birth documents.

The current number of beneficiaries is 400. According to current statistics, the Trust has assisted 201 primary school children, 110 in secondary education and 37 Advanced level students in the period 2013 /2014.

There are also 37 children who are attending tertiary education at Zimbabwe's institutions of higher learning including the University of Zimbabwe.

The Trust is also leasing 60 hectares of land for environment and agro-forestry projects.

The children who do not have birth certificates also receive assistance for the important document.

The success of the project is due to the shared vision between Ainamo and his wife Oili.

The couple met in 1996.

"When I met Seppo in 1996 he was paying school fees for 18 orphans and the number doubled the following year. In 1997, Dr S Hamalainen from the Central Bank of Finland visited the project and adopted Troy and Brenda Mbengo to provide for their education needs," she said.

Brenda completed her studies as a pharmaceutical technician while Troy completed a degree in Business Management and Accounting at the **Chinhoyi** University of Technology.

According to Oili, Dr Hamalainen has visited Zimbabwe three times to check on the progress of his adopted children as they scale the ladders of education.

"There are families in Finland who have adopted at least one of the children from Dzivaresekwa but obviously there is need for other partners to sponsor the children whose number continues to grow by the day," she said.

Oili added: "Seppo started operating from the back of his vehicle but the Trust has grown with more than 400 children coming to the centre for assistance."

Seppo and Oili bought land from the city of Harare to build the children centre.

"We identified a **site** which was virtually a dump-**site** and since the number of children had grown to 150 and we could not continue operating from the car. We started sourcing for funds from across the world to build the centre. We applied for funding from the foreign affairs ministry in Finland to build the kitchen. Our proposal was approved after three years and we built the 300-capacity kitchen and dining hall for the children," Seppo added.

He hailed Old Mutual Properties who provided a **property** manager to supervise the project while Durawall built the kitchen and dining hall.

Seppo added that he has found joy in the success of most of the children who have gone through Trust.

"I am motivated whenever I see all the talented children in the community get the education that is necessary for the development of their township and Zimbabwe as a whole.

"Zimbabwe has one of the best education systems in Africa but there some under-privileged children like orphans but if they do not get assistance.

"We made the project start running but it now make us run but we will continue to strive for the growth of this project," he said.

Dzikwa Trust field officer Mrs Levita Chenera said most of the children who have gone through the project have had excellent academic results.

"The trust is bringing hope to the children who had lost their hope after losing either one or both parents and there is need for a **buy-in** from the local business community.

"We have received support from European who value the education of our children but we need the corporate world to chip in," she said.

Mrs Chenera also paid tribute to locals, Mr Unity Sakhe and Mr Gilbert Mashonganyika who have adopted some children from the centre. There are also some people like Dr Chagonda, Dr Guramatunhu and the Methodist

Dental Clinic who provide medical care for our children when necessary," she said. One of the beneficiary Sethukile Ndlovu (20) is now studying Tourism and Hospitality Management at the University of Zimbabwe said the Trust was a welcome relief after she almost dropped out of school.

"I was attending Gillingham Primary School in 2007 when I got some sponsors from Finland, Gillian and Aulis Hakli. When I passed my Grade Seven, I enrolled at Dewure Mission and I chose to study at the UZ for my degree programme," she said.

Sethukile said the Trust was providing a life-changing opportunity for orphans in Dzivaresekwa.

"I had lost hope. I had nothing that I could help myself with so that I can complete my education but the sponsored helped me realize my dream of getting a decent education and I have even gone beyond expectation by enrolling at the UZ," she said.

Nineteen-year-old Takunda Malunga will on Monday next week fly to Algeria where he would be studying for Mechanical Engineering degree in Algiers after getting a second chance through the Trust.

"I lost both parents and never imagined myself getting another opportunity until the Trust helped me get a sponsor. I will be in Algeria for five years and when I come back I plan to contribute to the development of the engineering sector in Zimbabwe," said an elated Takunda.

The organization, while keeping a small number of salaried personnel, has been an inspiration for many volunteers and students from Zimbabwe and Europe.

Tatenda Mashumba, a development studies student at the Midlands State University, said working at the centre has been an eye opener.

"I am an orphan also and working at Dzikwa Trust has taught me to appreciate the little that I have received from my relatives. Working with orphans is an eye opener and I think the community can also learnt from such programmes to look after the less privileged in our midst.

"Guardians should try their best to look after the children who lose their parents and provide a stable home for the orphans so that they do not become destitute," she said.

The project has also volunteers Simon Siljamaki (19) from Finland and Kukka Imanen from Germany both of whom expressed satisfaction working with the Trust.

The Trust's budget continues to grow, reaching levels of more than US\$500 000 annually and Seppo and Oili believe that local companies can contribute.

"We need food for the children who come for their meals here and Zimbabweans can assist with food such as kapenta, beans, meat and other contributions for the centre to stay afloat."

The Dzikwa Trust will soon be launching their computer laboratory where they hope to start offering ICDL lessons.

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