



In December 2004, I went on a trip to Kenya to visit my family. My brothers accompanied me from Nairobi, the capital city to the rural village where I grew up. We had gone to visit my sister who still lives there. We would often take a stroll around to stretch our legs in the evenings and to visit with various people around the village.

It was during one of those night strolls that I would have an encounter that completely changed my life. It was around 8:00 pm, it was a cold dark night; there are no lights where we were walking, which is typical for this area unless you were near a store. As we walked, we heard a plaintive sound of a child weeping. Off in the bushes was a 6-year-old girl crying. Out of concern and curiosity, we approached the little girl to find out why she was alone and crying. There was terror all over her face and eyes when we found her. My sister leaned towards her and hugged her in a comforting way. We asked the child what was wrong and why she was out here all alone and crying. She responded, "I have run away from my step-grandmother's house because she hits me and I'm scared, I don't know what to do or where to go." "I don't want to go back there," she replied. We asked her where her parents were of which she responded, "They both died."

I found myself overcome with emotions and totally broke down. I found it hard to catch my breath and it was very difficult for me to comprehend what might be going on in that little girl's mind. My children were 4 years old at that time and I just could not imagine how horrifying an experience this would be for any child. And, perhaps my break down was also in part due to the fact that I was an orphan and that this possibly could have been my fate had it not been for my older sisters and brothers.

We took the little girl with us and upon reaching my sister's house, gathered more information from her. She was dirty and it appeared that she had not eaten in days. I soon found out that this little girl's name was Faith and that most of her close relatives had passed away. She was living with her step-grandmother who was not only abusive to her but literally had turned her into a slave. She attended a local school and was very intelligent but lacked a secure place to make any kind of real headway in school.

This child needed a real home, and to be around people who really cared about her. I asked my sister if she would take Faith into her home. We later found out that Faith had a brother and she had asked if he could come to stay with them as well. I told her that my wife and I would take care of all of their expenses and make sure they go to school.

There was more to come. Two years later, when I visited Kenya again, my sister told me that she had found two more children that were in need of a home.

“My sister has six children of her own – four still live with her. It occurred to me that there are still many more to help and that they cannot all fit into her home. I realized then, that what was needed was a group home, a place where these children can feel safe and secure as well as loved. I always had a special place in my heart for orphans because I see myself in them. It has become my dream to help as many of these children as possible.

I have discussed these plans to a close friend of mine who was touched by my story and has now made this his mission and dream as well. He told me that this cross should not be carried alone and that he would like to share in carrying it with me. We have since founded the non-profit organization called Footprints of Faith. We have begun Phase I of our mission. We have purchased some land in my home village of Rangala, and are going to begin groundbreaking, in December for a home to house ten children. We are hoping to raise money to help pay for the home and land as well as supporting the future needs of the children and sustaining the facility. In Phase II, it is our hope to raise enough money to eventually build a school and to allow for additional programs that would further enhance the lives of these beautiful children, so that one day they will be in a position to give back and change the lives of future generations.

My faith has provided me with the strength to take up this cross. These children desperately need our help, without our help many of these children will die. We ask for your prayers and any help that you can give.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Odwesso". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul Odwesso  
Director – Footprints of Faith