



## News Highlights

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Cecile, 11th Grade Student

## You Gave Me A Place to Belong

By Joan Oksenholt

**"I** have wonderful memories of our lives in the Democratic Republic of Congo. My parents loved us very much. Our family laughed and talked together; we had plenty of food and all the clothes we needed. There were many kids for me to play with in our area and I was happy in the security of childhood," Cecile remembers. **"Everything changed in 2012 when some of the government soldiers marched into our region.** Their mission was to beat, torture, rape, and kill Tutsis. My family had to run and hide from the very soldiers who were supposed to protect us. It was unimaginable! Eventually we had to find refuge in Rwanda. I was just five years old but the memory is engraved on my mind."

Their new life in the refugee camp was a hard adjustment for Cecile and her family. "It's an insane place to live. The camp is very crowded. Some of the men are violent. We continue to be severely challenged because our subsidy from the UNHCR gives us barely enough to buy a little food. Our clothing is tattered. Many times we have just one meal a day and some days we eat nothing. We long to go back home but we can't. **Our life now has to fit within the boundaries of the camp.**" Cecile explained that as she grew older, she began to understand the reality of life for girls in the camp. "Because girls are expected to do chores like cooking and washing clothes, they (Cont'd inside)



## Front Page Story Continued

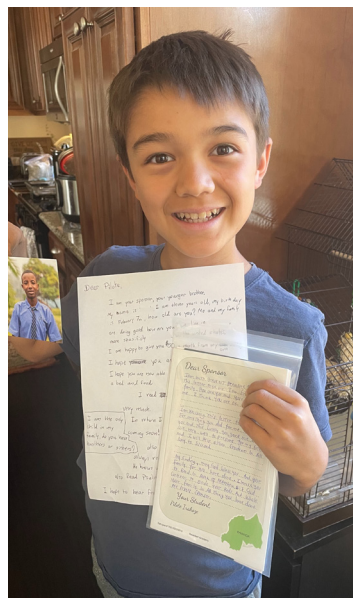
don't have as much time to study for school as the boys. They are often tired during class. Hunger continues to be an issue - it's hard to concentrate in class when your stomach is empty. Many young women don't have money to buy the monthly sanitary supplies they need so they're ashamed, they skip school, and their grades suffer." Cecile knows some young women who were abused and now have unwanted pregnancies. She says teens sometimes prostitute themselves to get food or clothing. PTSD is common among many refugees because of the traumatic events they've suffered. **"Where do I belong?" Cecile began asking herself. "This camp is a horrible place! It's not safe to live here. I'm Congolese but I can never go back home. The DRC seems like a foreign country to me. I'm not Rwandan. I'm a young refugee girl trying to survive in the camp, a place where I don't belong. I don't feel like I belong anywhere."**

Cecile knew that her only way out of the camp was through education. "God gave me the talent of learning easily, even when I was hungry. He gave me the ability to excel at school and I had high scores at the end of my ninth grade national exams. **I believe that God used those grades to lead Impact Hope to select me to attend Gahogo, one of the best high schools in Rwanda.** I am forever grateful because now

I have a hope for tomorrow. **My sponsors have changed my life and I'm so thankful!** I pray that God blesses them abundantly. I give them my assurance that I will not fail them. The Impact Hope sponsors are doing a sacred and blessed work. I'm so grateful for this gift! "

**"Because of Impact Hope, I am certain of my place in this world."**

Only sixteen, Cecile has a strong spiritual maturity. She is a deep thinker who loves to read the Bible and has memorized many verses that give her strength. Her eyes light up as she tells me about the teachers at Gahogo. "They've helped me understand that I don't have to worry about where I belong. **I am a child of Jesus and I belong to Him! I don't have to be afraid because Psalm 46:1 tells me that God is my refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. He's given me the peace of mind to overcome all the hardships I've experienced as a refugee.** My goal is to become a doctor and give health back to my patients. As a physician, I can help my family as well as people who desperately need medical care. Because of Impact Hope, I am certain of my place in this world. I'll do my best to bless others as you have blessed me. Thank you, Impact Hope!"



I am your sponsor, your younger brother  
My name is \_\_\_\_\_ I am eleven years old, my birthday is \_\_\_\_\_  
how old are you? Me and my family are doing good how are you? we live in amer.ca, more spacificly in the united states.  
I am happy to give you \$50 a month from my own money, I hope ~~you~~ you are blessed with it!  
I hope you are now able to be more comfortable with a bed and food  
I read ~~the~~ Matthew 5:7, thank you very much.  
I am the only child in my family, do you have brothers or sisters?  
In return I want to remind you that Jesus is coming soon! look up acts 1:11 also look up psalms 115:9 always remember to trust the lord He knows what is best.  
also Read psalms 112:1-10  
I hope to hear from you soon in your next letter

## A Child's Heart for Giving

At just 12 years old, this big-hearted sponsor is showing that you're never too young to make a difference. As an only child, he now calls his sponsored student his "older brother" and loves knowing he has a bed to sleep in and food to eat. More than that, they encourage each other by exchanging Bible verses, building a friendship across the world. His story is a sweet reminder that sponsors come in all ages—because kindness and love have no limits!

# Innocent WOMEN & CHILDREN OF ISIS

This International Women's Day, give **HOPE** to displaced women and children in Iraq through a Vocational Training Program.



**MATCH UP TO \$25,000!**

In honor of International Women's Day this March, we are partnering with AdventRelief to launch a Vocational Training Program for displaced women in Iraq. **These women, labeled as "Women and Children of ISIS," face deep stigma and are denied opportunities simply because of family or business ties to ISIS.** Many are widowed, left to care for their children in refugee camps, with no means of survival or hope for the future.

Mindy Thygeson, Founder of Impact Hope, and Liz Thomsen, Executive Director, visited these refugee camps in Iraq and saw the despair these women face daily. The lack of opportunity to learn or earn a living keeps them trapped in a cycle of poverty and hopelessness. But with your support, we can change this.

This International Women's Day, **you can help provide vocational training that empowers women with essential skills—business, tailoring, and handicrafts**—so they can build a brighter

future for themselves and their children. **By sharing the love of Jesus through a glimmer of hope, hearts can be stirred to faith in Him.**

Your donation will provide women with the tools they need to start their own businesses and gain financial independence. With six months of support, these women will be empowered to thrive.

Please join us in giving these women a chance to rebuild their lives. **Your gift will be matched up to \$25,000, making your impact even greater.** Together, we can help bring hope and a brighter future to these resilient women.

**To donate, visit [ImpactHope.com](http://ImpactHope.com).**

**Scan the QR code** to watch Mindy and Liz as they visit the refugee camps in Iraq and witness the desperate need—and the hope that's possible with your help.



## A Widow's Journey to Hope

Amina's life has been marked by hardship. At 48, she's lived in the Hasan Sham camp since 2015, after losing her husband and becoming the sole caretaker of thirteen children—nine daughters and four sons. Amina relied on her sewing skills to provide for them, mending clothes whenever she could find work. But without formal education, she feared that her future would always be one of struggle. For the first time, Amina felt hope when learning about the Vocational Training Program that is to come this year. With this new opportunity, Amina will be able to support her children with her own hands, providing them with a better future. More importantly, she hopes to inspire her daughters to believe that no matter their circumstances, they too can build a life of their own.



Amina has lived in the refugee camp since 2015 with her 9 children.





The 2025 January mission trip crew helped repair and bring water to the girls dorm at Rwankeri Adventist Academy!



## Hope In Action

What do you get when you bring together a mix of people of all ages with servant hearts? **Miracles!**

One of the academies we educate our Impact Hope students at had a great need of a water repair for the girls bathroom so they could have showers and water running through their pipes to do laundry, wash hands, and flush toilets. Girls were hauling water in buckets so they could accomplish all their tasks.

We took a team of volunteers, including 4 kids ages 5 to 14 who were amazing and helped every day! Praise God, miraculously at the last possible moment before leaving, **everything came together with all the necessary parts to create a working system to help 500+ girls with hygiene and sanitation!**

We have a great team of people working for Impact Hope Rwanda that took care of our volunteers and made it a great trip! We even got to visit some amazing animals at the Safari park!

Hope to see you on a mission trip coming soon! **Scan the QR code below to learn of upcoming mission opportunities!**



## Ways **YOU** Can Make an Impact

### SPONSOR A STUDENT

\$50 monthly provides a safe education at a Christian boarding school and all living essentials.

### DONATE

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

### FOLLOW

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P.O. Box 28 GLADSTONE, OR 97027

503.673.3905 | INFO@IMPACT-HOPE.ORG | IMPACTHOPE.COM

