

Living on \$1.25 A Day

Over 1.2 billion people live below the extreme poverty level of \$1.25 per day as established by the World Bank. How is it possible for someone to survive on what may be the coins some of us give to our children for a daily allowance? The thought of living on \$1.25 per day is almost incomprehensible to us in the western world. Where would we live? What if we were sick and couldn't work? How would we pay for medical care or medicine? But the foremost question is probably: how could anyone eat on \$1.25 a day?

To try to understand how a family survives with only \$1.25 per person, we talked to Michael Ndura, who works at the Cheshire Home for the Aged in Kenya. He gave the following example of a family of five: a mother, father, and three children who live nearby in the outskirts of Nairobi.

The family eats two meals a day, which consists of porridge called ugali which is made by boiling maize in water with vegetables. Despite the fact that both parents work, which consists mainly of labor, the meals include no meat and very little protein.

The cost of the two daily meals for the family is \$1.00 for a 2kg package of maize and the vegetables cost about \$1.40. After adding the cost of fuel to cook the meals, the cost per person for the two meals is about 55 cents.

The little amount of money not spent on food is used for a hut for the family to live. The destitute older people supported by Michael's House, who can no longer work, have no assets or family support, subsist on much less. In fact, our standard monthly pension is only \$15 a month, but it is enough for them to get by and provides them with the security knowing they will get our support each month.

If the parents cannot work or get sick or the cost of daily essentials increase, the security and welfare of the entire family is threatened. A family crisis often means little food and loss of housing and no medical care if sick. There is almost certainly no "safety net" of government agencies or charities to help. The elderly are even more vulnerable if deprived of essential food, shelter and medical care.

Michael's House continues to exist because of generous donors like you, who wish to help the indigent elderly in their final days, months or years. Your support provides these individuals with the indescribable peace that simply comes with a full stomach, a secure place to sleep, essential care to maintain their dignity, and knowing that others care for them.

**Elderly at day center in
Kenya receive food for home.**



**Women at day center celebrate Kenya's
Golden Jubilee.**



**Kenyan slum where many destitute
elderly live.**

Michael's House – WE Continue to Make a Difference

“When you tend to another's dying embers, you find both warmth and an increase in the glow of your own fire.” Richelle E. Goodrich



Jesca in Zimbabwe where the chicken project has helped the old age home meet expenses.



Widowed Zimbabwean grandmother who must care for her grandchildren.



Samuel receiving care at Zimbabwe Zororai old people's home.

When Michael's House was founded in 2003, our mission to focus on the destitute elderly was made because of the marginalized plight of so many elderly, especially in Africa. Government and large aid organizations resources were primarily targeted to children and young families.

The state of the many elderly remains dire today. The myth - that elderly populations do not exist in the developing world because life expectancy is low, is contradicted by statistics. Even in the world's poorest countries, those who survive infancy and childhood diseases have a very good chance of living to be grandparents. However, after years of physical labor, poor nutrition and lack of health care, the elderly are often in a fragile state of health.

We were recently reminded of this stark reality when we approved funding to build three tricycles for elderly non-ambulatory destitute people in Malawi. Even though we quickly approved the purchase, by the time the tricycles were built, two of the intended recipients had died. But the tricycle gifted to the third person, Dina, enables her to tend to her garden without scooting around on her bottom. The two remaining tricycles were given to needy recipients nearby as there is no shortage of those in need of help.

One of the advantages of being a small grassroots organization is that we can usually respond to requests much more quickly than large organizations. Even with our streamlined approval, this case illustrates just how fragile life is for the destitute elderly in developing countries.

For older people, there are numerous barriers to effective health care. Most health care facilities are concentrated in urban areas, while the majority of older people in developing countries live in rural areas and they do not have the money to pay for transportation to receive the care they require, let alone for health care itself.

Older people often encounter negative attitudes from medical personnel who give them low priority for treatment based on their age. They remain a neglected group, largely invisible to those who promote economic development, health care and education. Although the high birth rates previously experienced in many countries are now falling, young people remain the focus of planners' attention.

In the early stages of an emergency, older people are physically less able than most adults to live without shelter, travel long distances and struggle for food and other resources. Although provisions for free health services to older people is stipulated in the many African countries policies, e.g., the Tanzanian National Ageing policy, many older people still do not access these services due to inability to prove their age – birth documents are non-existent in many rural areas.

In part due to the AIDs epidemic, many elderly grandparents must care for their grandchildren after their children have died. The widowed Zimbabwean grandmother in the photo on the left must care for her grandchildren. She has no choice. There is no one else to feed and house them.

So our challenge to help the destitute elderly continues. And together, we have changed and saved the lives of thousands of elderly people over the years. Thank you for your support and hope that together we can continue to help them.

“A Mattress For Me!! I Cannot Imagine The Sleep I Will Be Sleeping From Now Onwards!”

Those above were words one elderly person shouted when she saw the mattresses coming out. Another said *“I was cold now I am warm and now I have a soft place to sleep on!!”* *“It is hard to express how it feels,”* said an elderly woman after receiving her mattress. Our elderly people were so happy when they received their beautiful warm blankets a few months ago. *“It feels like life is now starting although we are advanced in age,”* they said.

Sleeping on a mattress seems like a luxury deep in the villages and most people cannot afford to buy one. Poor and old people sleep on local beds made of logs tied together with grass put on top finally, as a traditional mat. The grass needs to be replaced from time to time because if the grass stays longer, they can become dusty and it causes chest infections and the grass mats harbor insects that could be harmful.

The joy of our elderly people cannot be explained by mere words. They have promised to pray for their benefactors. They asked me to convey their gratitude.

On behalf of the elderly people, I am grateful for your support towards the destitute elderly in Kirambi, Rwanda.

Angela K



“ I am happy, I will die and when I reach Heaven, I will boast that I slept on a mattress in my lifetime.”



DID YOU KNOW?

Michael’s House is a 100% volunteer-run organization.

You can follow Michael’s House on facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/michaelshouse01>



There are about 13 million AIDS orphans in sub-Saharan Africa, and that at least 50 per cent of them are being raised by their grandmothers.

Annual Meeting for Election of Trustees and Officers was held on June 14, 2014

Trustee Appointments

Three year term: Ann Costello, Ph.D, D.M.D, Ms. Sharon Craddock, and Mr. Dennis Tarnar
Two year term: Mr. Getnet Habteselassie, Ms. Deborah Halpern, and Ms. Lynda Mischler
One year term: Mr. Matt Rogers, Dr. James Coolahan and Dr. Michael Craig.

Election of Officers (one year term):

President: Mr. Dennis Tarnar
Vice President: Ms. Lynda Mischler
Secretary: Ms. Sharon Craddock
Recording Secretary: Ann Costello, Ph.D, D.M.D
Treasurer: Mr. Getnet Habteselassie

Fifth Annual Michael's House Golf Tournament Held

On Tuesday, May 13, Hawkins Electric Service and Hawkins Electrical Construction sponsored the Fifth Annual Michael's House Golf Tournament at the Whiskey Creek Golf Course in Ijamsville, MD. An immense thank you to them for their continued sponsorship. And an additional thank you to the following sponsors.

Platinum Sponsors

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Evolve Consulting Group – Crofton, MD
Graybar – Lanham, MD
O'Connor Plumbing & Heating – Germantown, MD



Left: Golfers contemplating their next move.

Right: Michael's House volunteers.

Below: The golf cart convoy getting ready for the tournament.

SUPPORT

Your support makes all that we do for the destitute elderly possible. They have come to depend on the love and generosity from those of us more fortunate on the other side of the world. We cannot let them down!

Donate on the web (www.michaels-house.org) or make checks payable to: Michael's House Inc., Post Office Box 856, Burtonsville, MD 20866. Michael's House is a U.S. based 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Contributions to Michael's House in the United States are tax-deductible to the extent allowable by law.

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

We Would Like Your Feedback!

Are our newsletters informative and provide the information you desire about Michael's House and the destitute elderly we support? We would love to receive your feedback, questions and content comments. You can drop us a note to the below address, send an email to info@michaels-house.org or leave a voice message at 301-836-1006 with your feedback. Please also pass on your newsletter to others who may be interested in learning about Michael's House or provide us with their address.

Michael's House, P.O. Box 856, Burtonsville, MD 20866