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GONSALVA LUNGU

GONSALVA was born September 25, 1996 in Songea, Tanzania. She was born disabled with only one full leg (her left) and a half right leg to the knee only. Both of her arms were also disfigured, going only to her elbows. With the poor medical conditions, they are uncertain as to why. When her father first saw her as a baby he was ashamed and he abandoned both the child and his wife. Alone, her mother had to be brave and face the situation head on. Originally not many people were very supportive, being unsure of the unknown. The more people looked down on them due to her disability, the stronger and more determined her mother became. Gonsalva's mother was determined to see her child as a gift from God and not a burden. She was determined to raise her God-given child alone counting the blessings and support from the few people who cared.

As Gonsalva got older the issues that came up became more difficult. Her mom began to feel desperate from all the uncertainty and the upcoming challenges they were beginning to face. Her mother was unable to work, caring for Gonsalva was a full time position. Being able to provide for her family became more and more daunting. This overwhelming fear of not being able to care for and provide for the child she loved so dearly began to haunt her and she started looking for help.

The desperate yet very patient mother found SWACCO in early January 2007. SWACCO, the Songean Women and Children's Care Organization that is supported solely by the Mwangaza Jitegemee Foundation, was eager to help care for both Gonsalva and her exhausted mother.

Fortunately, at the tip of her right elbow there is a small claw that in cooperation with the blunt left elbow she can pick up light objects – food, small items, utensils, and pencils for writing in school. Though her daily tasks throughout the day are still challenging, this ability manages to give her a sense of independence, strength and determination to try things herself before accepting help.

For mobility, she could jump with the one leg or support herself with crutches. Fortunately, MJF was able to fund for Gonsalva to be provided with an artificial leg. Once she became used to it she became very mobile and excited about her new found freedom and independence. The problem with the artificial limb was that it needed to be re-made every year due to her growth. The cost to keep up with that was extreme. Each time she needs a replacement MJF/ SWACCO cover the expenses. These include two bus tickets to and from the distant hospital that makes the artificial leg, room and board while they are there, and all of the costs associated with the actual leg and fitting of the leg. While this is an extreme amount of money for them, they realize the importance of investing in Gonsalva. They are unable to do this yearly due to finances, but they were able to have her fitted early in the year of 2012.

Gonsalva and her mother are supported by MJF / SWACCO. They are able to help with rent for the apartment where they live, food, medical and clinical needs, clothes and more. They also cover all of Gonsalva's schooling needs including tuition, school uniform, books and supplies. Currently she is in Form III in Making'inda Secondary School. Gonsalva is a very bright student in school. She studies very hard, she is able to write and draw like other children. She is excited for her future and wants to go on to the University. She is at the top of her class now and wants to become a lawyer to help people with disabilities.

