

An overview of Suubi 2019

Day 1

From my blog post Jan 5th. We paid for the C section of one of our women. The baby was breach and the doctors said that the birth would be life-threatening. She had a healthy baby boy on December 31. This woman had been the head of our soap workshop.

The sad thing that happened afterward was that she and another woman at the soap workshop had to be fired. They had been stealing money and materials from the workshop to sell them for their own profit. And we found out that they have been very mean and intimidating to the other women in the soap workshop. We all felt really betrayed. It was such a blow to all of us. I ended up talking with both of these women at the graduation party in June. I could not allow them to return to work. And that was tragic. The positive thing looking back on this is Sylvia took over as the head of the soap workshop. And she moved mountains this year. I will write more in the following days. And we did give this woman a C section that saved her life and the life of her child. I have no regrets. But 2019 started with a great deal of stress.

On December 29th (2018) the two daughters of one of our women got badly burned in an accident. Their mom was out selling soap. The neighbor was watching them. The neighbor made her living boiling water on a coal fire. She sold the water in small bags for a few cents. I cannot imagine how poor some people are. But it was an honest living. But on that day the pot of water slipped off the fire and burnt the two girls. The other neighbors heard the screaming of the kids and threatened the woman who had been watching them. The neighbor who was helping out now was so afraid of the threats or consequences that she packed her stuff and ran off in the night.

The good news is that these girls did receive medical treatment. Both are perfectly fine. I still am sad that the neighbor moved. It takes 6 months' rent as a deposit on a new place to live. I can imagine this poor woman was homeless if she had no family to run to. She was doing the teenage mother a favor. And it was an accident. As you will find out in the days ahead, accidents happen. Grace is needed when accidents happen. The burns were awful, but the neighbor fleeing was tragic.

Altogether, we have had 12 medical emergencies in the past two months. (Those 12 emergencies happen at the end of 2018).

The truth is, we have spent thousands of Euros on medical costs in 2019. We paid for burns, typhoid fever, and malaria. It is medical costs that weigh like millstones around the neck of the poor. But with good treatment, everyone has recovered. Our women and children are healthy. God gave us what we needed to support them.

Day 2

From my blog post on January 9th. We began raising money for soap to be given away. On January 24th the women from the soap workshop went into the slums and gave away lots of soap for free for the poor who cannot afford soap. And as they were giving out soap, they met a local council member that was impressed and interested in what they were doing. He

walked with them for over two hours because no one had money for a bus. This 'chance' meeting opened up many doors this year.

And on January 24th they handed out 100's more bars of soap in the slum. Many people from Germany and America gave us money for the soap give-away and we used this money for school fees for the kids of our women. We sent 16 kids to school in the spring term.

Day 3

On Feb 16 the women traveled 70 km North of Kampala to hand out soap in a poor school.

Day 4

Juliet got a job as a sewing teacher in a vocational school. She was one of the women in our two-year sewing school. This was such a great victory for us.

Day 5

On March 3rd the women celebrated a feast. It was one of 12 monthly feasts celebrated in 2019. At the feast, all our women and children can eat all they want. And many kids from the street come as well. They are often hungry and it was a great meal for them.

Day 6

On March 6th I got my airline ticket for the June mission's trip. And we had flights booked for most of the team as well.

Sylvia and her baby Jessa attended the European MOPS conference in Heidelberg Germany. She was able to meet the Global Volunteer Manager for MOPS, Cristina Cardoso and the VP of Global MOPS, Sherri Crandall and a MOPS board member [Nichole Tautz](#). Such a big honor.

. And she also met many others. There were leaders from MOPS groups from 20 countries. She was two weeks in Germany.

Day 7

On April 11th we launched a fundraiser for washable pads and school fees. The money for 500 pad kits was raised successfully. Our sewing women sewed 3000 pads that we gave away in June to 500 girls at a rural school. With the extra money of the fundraiser and some separate donations, we paid the school fees of 16 kids for the next quarter.

Day 8

On April 26 we began our weekly Friday prayer letter. Honestly, we have had very much stress and trouble in the year to this point. But prayer really has been a shield and a strength. Sylvia and I were applying for many grants. We also had her investigating school sponsorship programs to see if any of them would take on the kids of our women. We wanted to partner with a program and not reinvent the wheel. We have desperately needed prayer. And we began asking for prayer every Friday.

Day 9

May was the final month of our sewing school. All the women were getting really nervous. During their 2 years of training they had received an allowance to help with food and rent. Graduation meant the celebration of finishing the program. But it also meant having to pay their own rent. It was scary. And we kept Sarah our sewing teacher on staff. She has found small projects for all our women to make some money. She remains on salary and continues to find jobs for our women. They are paying their own rent, and for food with their new skills.

Day 10

We could again pay the school fees for the summer term. 16 kids went back to school. But we knew we could not continue to crowdfund school fees forever. This was a recurring big expense. All summer long we looked at programs we could partner with. All of the good programs were already full and had a waiting list. We had offers to partner with a few programs. But these programs kept 50% for administration costs. Others expected us to find our own sponsors anyway. It was very discouraging. But I was convinced our kids needed to attend school. Everything felt impossible in May. One thing I have learned in 2019 is you need to judge things with the benefit of time and distance. If you ever traveled on a bus in Kampala and felt the bumpy road you would begin to understand how hard it is to visit one place after another. If you ever spent days writing grant proposals, you would know the work it takes. The hope of so many people were riding on our shoulders. And in May we tried so hard but saw no success. We all needed courage in May. The courage to keep trying.

Day 11

In June Sylvia broke her foot. This was just before our missions team arrived. We brought a pair of crutches. And we had to help her learn to walk with them. The goal of this trip was to see things. To see programs like SINA, and companies like AfriPads. We hoped to find work for the 8 women graduating from sewing. The ninth woman had given up hope of finding work. Instead, she responded to a person who recruited her to work as a house servant in Saudi Arabia. Sadly thousands of young people are recruited into modern slavery in the Middle East each month. I wish we knew she was thinking about going. We could have warned her not to go. But she was quite. She did not tell anyone.

Day 12

In June our project team traveled to Uganda for 2 weeks. The highlight of the trip for me personally was the day we handed out washable sanitary pads in 3 different schools. My kids, Thomas and Sarah were on this trip. And they played soccer with the kids at these schools. It was truly awesome to see my kids stepping out and using their gifts. And it was so humbling to see the women when they received a pad kit. This was one of the best days of my life. I am not exaggerating. It felt totally great to see the whole process complete. And I am so grateful for my friends who traveled with us. Each one of them is so amazing and gifted. We came to graduate the women from our sewing school. The women each sewed their own graduation dress. And we had a great celebration. It marked a two-year milestone. A victory to celebrate the accomplishment of these women going from not knowing how to use a pair of scissors to being trained tailors.

Day 13-

After graduation, we decided to give each of the women a sewing machine. Actually, we agreed to give them a machine in exchange for sewing 450 washable sanitary pads. And many people agreed with this idea. It only took just a week to raise the funds to buy 8 sewing machines. And the joy this gave them was extreme!!!! All I can say is thank you. Thank you to every person who has donated for machines, pads, the well or whatever else. I have asked for so much. But so many have given. We are a blessed group.

Day 14

In July the women started to make fused plastic fabric and use it with African fabric to make shopping bags. We no longer paid them an allowance, so they needed to get creative. I remember asking Sylvia how they were doing. She said they were not complaining and they were busy. So it was a transition, but one that is working.

Day 15

In August our big push was to build a water well for a village with 300 families. Katrina Funk and her team lead that project. I think it took about 6 weeks to raise the funds to build this well. And they also had to screen and hire contractors. But they did it all. And now the well is being built.

Day 16

The Soap workshop also received its Community Based Organization license in August. It seemed impossible to receive a certificate of quality. We have tried for nearly 2 years to receive a quality license. But in August we also got a recommendation for quality for our soap so it can now be sold officially even in stores.

Day 17

In September we paid school fees for 16 kids again. To be honest I did not know how we would get the funds. It was summer vacation. I did not even try so hard to get the fees. We were mostly raising funds for the well project in the summer. But the funds did come. And since we did not find another way, we decided to start our own school sponsorship program. So God willing each of our kids will have a regular sponsor. And we will no longer need to crowdfund each term for school fees. In January 30 kids will need school fees. It is actually one of those impossible things I have total peace about.

Day 18

On September 13th I read the story of a 12-year-old girl in Kenya killing herself because she was shamed in class for having her period. This story moved me so much, I am determined to have pads made for school girls. So we began another pad give away. This time we decided to charge 10 euros a kit for sponsors to support this project. The funds would pay for the fabric and to have it commercially cut. And our women would get paid well for sewing these kits. It took 6 weeks to raise the money to have the material for the first 1500 and our sewing women

were busy making them. Jürgen and Nicole will get to give these away in their trip in October. And the kits were also shown to possible grant givers.

We also produced some high-quality professional pad kits for the European market. The professional kits may be sold/given for donations in Europe and open doors to funding. This way, Suubi could make high-end pads for money and with the extra profits make pads for school girls and refugees to be given away.

In September we also found out that we made it to the second round of a Skills Development Fund grant. This was the very first time we actually made it to the second round of grant consideration. We poured two weeks of time into the final grant proposal. And if we actually win this grant, it will pay for a new class of the sewing school.

Day 19

In October the water well was built. This was a big project finally seeing completion. We want to support the farm of our group leader Sylvia and her husband Emmanuel so that the farm could also be a base and source of support for our projects. But before we could do anything with animals there had to be a reliable source of water. The whole town of 300 families has no well and in the dry season, they have to walk for hours to get water. Sometimes the animals die because there is no water. That should all change. The plan is to have a goat farm.

Day 20

Jürgen and Nicole traveled to Uganda to visit our women, the workshops and dedicate the well. This trip was an adventure. It was Jürgen's first trip to Uganda. And I gave them an impossible list of things that needed to be done in the shortest time. During the trip, Nicole got very sick with some kind of infection that required a hospital visit at night and some serious antibiotics. And Jürgen had a bad reaction to malaria drugs. But they were grinding through the to-do-list. Then our driver Godfrey had an awful car crash. The car and motorcycle that caused the accident drove away but Godfrey ended up in a deep ditch and then in prison. It took a day to get him out and then we had the drama with the car rental company. But the first 12 kids in the group got permanent sponsors and a photo of the family, individual or group that was going to sponsor them. And they also handed out washable sanitary pads in schools, as well as some sports equipment. It was a powerful trip!

Day 21

Goat City is the name of the farm and it got its first goats. And so far God has protected them. A gang of organized thieves traveled from farm to farm stealing goats and cows. Emmanuel locked his cows and goats in the goat house. The police came and chased the robbers. One man was shot and killed but our farm was spared. We waited for a whole year to start this goat farm. We saved the money people donated in 2018 for goats and we had to wait for a reliable source of water. But now we have water and goats. Many are already pregnant. And as long as they do not die from sickness, or get stolen, we will see an increase. Eventually, and this might take a few years, Goat City could help Suubi Teen MOPS become a self-sustaining NGO. But we still need grace. Now it has rained so much that the farm and much land in the area are flooded. The goats have a cold and are getting sick. And

there are still robbers out there. The risks are still there. It takes courage to keep going and trying to build something up against all the set-backs and threats.

Day 22

Suubi was invited to attend an expo on December 13th. This will be a chance to show our soap and washable sanitary pads and liquid soap to some major donor agencies. The month of November is taken up with preparation for this great opportunity. And the United Nations Women's ministry invited Suubi to make a short video about the pads and soap. There is a strong sense that great doors might open. But we also know they might not open. November has been a very nervous month...but also full of wonder. How in the world did we get this chance? We feel like we are dancing with kings.