

My name is Mabula Makanda. I am among the children raised at the Bethany family. Before I start to share my life story, I would first like to extend my special thanks to the Bethany family and all the members of this family including the UK team and all the sponsors around the world who support the Bethany family, but also my special thanks should go to Graham Pountain who has been with me since I joined the Bethany family, he has been a great dad of mine not only a supporter but he has been our father no matter what and I do say from inside my heart.

I joined the Bethany family in 2007, I was a young boy, Bethany gave me each and everything I needed this includes food, clothes and shelter, Bethany even took me to schools that I could continue with my primary education because I was only in standard three when I joined the Bethany family. I was taken to Yitwimila primary school which is a local government primary school. I spent few years studying at that, before completing the primary level of education we were transferred from Yitwimila primary school to the Bethany primary school but things did not work as expected so we were again taken back to Yitwimila primary school where I completed my primary level of education in 2013 (I finished standard seven). In this year (2013) we did national exams where, if you get good results or perform well you get to join secondary school. I felt so happy when the results came out as I was among the students who had been chosen to join secondary school.

I joined Sogesca secondary school (in 2014) and I started form one. Life at the Bethany family was very good and I was just happy with life at school. After a while I became a good footballer not only at school but also at home, everybody liked the way I played football. Football started to separate me from my education because I had befriended it. Day after day I started hating school and playing football was all I wanted to do, I thought I would become a good footballer in the world. I started to quit some of the school days and I even didn't want to listen to any kind of advice from anyone about school. After spending two years at Sogesca secondary school (form one and form two), I did a national exam (for completing two years at secondary school), the results came out and were just good because I scored a distinction of 3.6. Having achieved this kind of results my care-wokers at the Bethany family, my fellow children, my teachers at the secondary school and other people who knew me thought that I had abandoned the dream of becoming a footballer and that I was going to continue with school, but that was not it, I was still living in this dream.

At this time all the big boys who were living at the Bethany family and going to secondary had to move from our former secondary school (Sogesca secondary school) to another secondary school which is called Lugeye secondary school where we were supposed to continue with form three and form four which is the last year in secondary school. This school is found in another district far away from the Bethany family. On my side I thought that going to another school far from home, would make a better chance for me to leave school and Bethany so that I could go to the streets to make my dream come true. Before planning all these I had already asked the Bethany coordinator to leave Bethany and I even wrote a letter to show how serious I was about this, but they didn't agree with me, they just stuck on their words that I'm supposed to go to school and even if I was tired of being at the Bethany family, they were taking me to Kitongo (village where the Lugeye secondary school is found) where I would be free and they were taking me there not to play football but rather to study, football could be something extra to do in life. Despite the advice I still thought of disappearing from Bethany and that's what I exactly did.

I left Bethany, went to Mwanza where I spent some time there then I out to Dar es salaam a place I thought I would accomplish my dream of becoming a footballer but things did not work as expected, mind you that even being a footballer as I wanted to be needs support on your own it's difficult to achieve a dream like this although at first I thought I would manage. I ended up getting an injury and life in Dar es salaam became too tough that I even started going hungry. Being an orphan and having no one to help me there in the streets, I decided to return to the Bethany family (in January 2022) because I knew that this is the only family I have, though I have nothing to pay back to Bethany for all they had given to me and I was just very ashamed of how I had wasted the opportunity of being at Bethany at the beginning. I really had great plans with this footballer dream because my intention was to make people around the world to know the Bethany family through me playing football. So after coming back to Bethany I met the Bethany family coordinator (Miss Paulo) and I explained to her about what happened to me before I left Bethany and what happened to me there in the streets because at that time when I asked to leave the Bethany family she was not the coordinator the coordinator was Mr Bujiku. She was so disappointed in me and she asked me a lot of questions, one of the questions was "so Mabula if you get a chance now what do you want Bethany to do for you?" I had nothing to answer I just felt so bad and asked for forgiveness for all the wrong things I had done to the Bethany family. Now I realise that all the things that the Bethany family is doing for us are good, the people who are supporting us and our carers at the Bethany family have good dreams for us they want us to get a better future but we just take it easy and sometimes we don't understand we think that it's our right to get everything we are being given here at Bethany, we forget that we are here only because of God's grace. Miss Paulo gave me a chance to stay at the Bethany for few days while she communicates with the supporters (Graham Pountain and David Borland) and she also told me that she will be inspecting my behaviour, if I behave badly I'll have to leave because Bethany does not want rude people. I asked Miss Paulo (the Bethany family coordinator) if I could help looking after the young children and advice them about how life is outside the Bethany, she accepted that and she also reminded me about behaving well and working as hard as I can. I thank God for this for this opportunity and I even thank Miss Paulo a lot for her encouragement, I also thank all members of the Bethany family for letting me back into the family and from this experience I learn that, "don't bite the hand that feeds you". Thank you.