

# Sunday Girl

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**\* ZARA MARTIN \***

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children is it really going to do anything?"  
But actually, yes, it is.*

# **TWIGAS'HOUSE;**

**a non- profit non-governmental  
Swiss organisation aiming to  
change the lives of vulnerable  
children in Tanzania.**



The Oxford Dictionary defines the word charity as "An organization set up to provide help and raise money for those in need". I couldn't agree more, however, I think charity is also a celebration of human compassion something which in recent times can feel slightly lacking. In the days of Trump, the refugee crisis and god knows the list goes on I find it admirable and exciting to meet people who are interested in change. And so I introduce Lara and Sandrine Denti, the founders of Twigas'House; a non-profit non-governmental Swiss organisation aiming to change the lives of vulnerable children in Tanzania. By building an orphanage in the rural town of Gairo these powerhouse sisters plan to give 24 children (to start with!) a safe and stable environment to grow.

### **When was the idea of Twigas'House born?**

Sandrine: For this, we have to delve back into the past. In 2012 I visited Tanzania and by chance ended up in a small town called Gairo. It was there that I met our partner Chacha (the town pastor and founder of Bethel Orphan Support Centre) and was introduced to his incredible work.

In 2012, the Bethel Centre was hosting 207 children each Saturday to teach them about values and self-care and to provide them with a meal, they did this in one room with a maximum of 2 staff members. I remember so clearly watching all 207 children entering the classroom in silence and staring at me, it was at that moment that my life changed.

When I returned home I told my sister everything and we booked our flights for the following year.

Lara: In 2016 whilst studying for our masters in London we really started thinking about Gairo and the possibility of a charity project and the yearning to help and return to Tanzania became stronger and stronger.

So, we booked another trip to familiarize ourselves with the environment, the legalities etc. and Twigas'House was born. Funds were raised, construction was started and here we are 1 year in.

### **What would you say is your biggest challenge within this project?**

Lara: The distance and keeping the communication open on both sides. Not in technical terms, there are phones and internet, it's about different cultures. Sandrine even moved to Tanzania for 8 months at the beginning of the construction and still had to work hard at communication.

Sandrine: To always keep in mind that this is a partnership. Let me explain...

The foundation of this charity is the partnership between us and The Bethel Centre. It's their ideas and their wishes, they know their community best and so we always need to ask "how can we best support them according to their needs"?

### **What's surprised you the most about this project?**

Sandrine: The commitment and honesty of everyone involved.

Lara: I truly believe that people are good inside but it can certainly be hard to remain humane and optimistic in the world today. I've found watching the commitment and progression in the project really has confirmed that goodness does exist.

### **Now, for the reason you're there... What challenges do the children in Gairo face?**

Lara: There are two parts to this answer; the one that the children see and the one from an outsiders perspective.

The obvious one is a limited access to even the most basic needs; healthcare, water and nutrition. It creates a cycle of poverty.

A lack of water leads to uncleanliness which leads to health issues and insufficient nutrition means it's harder to fight for their mental and physical wellbeing. The wheel is constantly spinning.

And for me, at the end of it, one bowl of porridge a day isn't enough.

Sandrine: Secondly, we are in the context of extreme poverty and so any challenges are not comparable to the west.

However, we notice that as soon as you can start walking you take on a responsibility of work, given this the children aren't having their childhood.

### **Wow, so with that in mind where do you even start?**

Lara: You start with the most obvious and urgent, filling the humanitarian part first and then the dream is to expand that.

*As of mid 2018 the amount of children visiting the centre on Saturday's has increased to 326. With that many vulnerable children, how will you choose who will stay at Twigas'House?*

Sandrine: We are not in the position to choose, it's not our role and it requires a lot of legalities. That decision will mainly involve the authorities and Chacha.

### **What's your favourite part of working with children?**

Sandrine: Teaching and watching the speed at which they learn. You take a map into a classroom, show them somewhere and a month later they can tell it's exact point.

Witnessing childhood is a joy, similar to the western world when a kid actually puts the iPad down and goes to play on the swing.

### **Any final words?**

Lara: I think, when you start a project like this it's hard to see if these little steps will make an impact.

There are 30,000 people in Gairo, however there are 55 million in Tanzania and that's only one country. What about the needs of everyone else in the world?!

You start thinking 'Omg I'm doing this for 24 children is it really going to do anything?'

But actually, yes, it is.