

Mother
of Malawi

“Annie Chikhwaza runs a wonderful orphanage called Kondanani... she is an inspiration”

– *The Sunday Times*

“Everywhere across Malawi, children sit by the roadside, waiting for something terrible. Here, they run up to you, each more charming, clever, funny and take-home-able than the last”

– *The Guardian*

“I can’t stop talking about Kondanani. There is no place like it!”

– *Guy Ritchie*

“Kondanani is a five-star orphanage. What they are doing is extraordinary. It’s a centre of excellence. A fantastic level of care is being given to these children”

– *Jacques Peretti, Channel 4*

Annie Chikhwaza was brutally attacked and left for dead.

She overcame hatred with love, and the result is Kondanani Children’s Village – an “oasis of love” that she and her late husband, Lewis, founded in Malawi in 1998. Since then, hundreds of lives have been saved in this nation with a million orphans, and Kondanani continues to offer hope to a new generation of African leaders.

Annie has been interviewed by major TV networks and Kondanani has been recognized in the media as an example of good aid to Africa. When American celebrity Madonna went to Malawi to adopt a baby in 2008 the orphanage became a focus of global attention, and a Dutch network produced a documentary on Annie entitled *Mother of Malawi*.

“Kondanani” means “Love one another”, and Annie

lives this out daily. Her story is one of victory over defeat and forgiveness over injustice. Suffering has been no stranger to her. She knows the pain of abuse, self-harm, and depression. Her first husband mistreated her and she survived the trauma of divorce. She knows the threat of having children removed and the anguish of dealing with abortion. Lewis’s family rejected her, she was falsely accused and attacked, and her life hung in the balance. It took months for her to heal, but she knew the power of forgiveness. Throughout her life Annie has reached out from her own pain to comfort others. Now a widow, she continues to build a brighter future for the children in her care.

www.motherofmalawi.com

About the author

Al Gibson was born in Zimbabwe and graduated with a degree in journalism from Rhodes University in 1984. He attended Rhema Bible Training Centre and spent seventeen years working as a journalist in South Africa. He now lives in the UK, where he has been with GOD TV (www.god.tv) since 2001 as Communications Officer and Editor of the global television network's publications.

In close on thirty years in media, Al has interviewed many inspirational leaders. As an author, his passion is to inspire readers with true-life stories of those who have overcome impossible obstacles. His first book, *Life on the Line*, focuses on Des Sinclair, who was kicked out of his home as a boy and met God on a rubbish dump! This was the start of an amazing journey on which Des was left for dead several times, yet he miraculously survived and now encourages people to become a lifeline to others.

Visit www.kondanani.org to find out more about the orphanage and www.hallofffaithbooks.com for the latest news about Al's books.

Mother of Malawi

The story of Annie Chikhwaza,
who created an oasis of love in a country of
orphans

As told to

Al Gibson

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wonderful late husband, Lewis Chikhwaza, who gave me so much support throughout our marriage in spite of the pain he suffered as a result of the attack on my life; to my dear children – Samuel, Rebekah, Paul, and Esther – who are so very precious to me; and to each of the children of Kondanani, as together we build a new generation of leaders in Malawi.

Antje Saakje Chikhwaza

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Foreword



RORY ALEC

RELIGION THAT GOD OUR FATHER
ACCEPTS AS PURE AND FAULTLESS IS
THIS: TO LOOK AFTER ORPHANS AND
WIDOWS IN THEIR DISTRESS...

(James 1:27, NIV)

Having a true faith in God includes caring for widows and orphans and helping the helpless. This is the heart of the work of Kondanani and of GOD TV, and we're privileged to be a part of what God is doing through the far-reaching ministry of Annie Chikhwaza to help the children of Africa.

Annie has very nearly lost her life on several occasions and it's a complete miracle that she is alive today! She is a woman of tremendous faith and an inspiration to people worldwide. You'll be challenged as you read this extraordinary story of God's faithfulness, protection, and provision.

It's amazing to think that a woman born in the Netherlands went to England, to South Africa, and then to Malawi, where she married a wonderful man, her late husband, Lewis Chikhwaza, and where God used them both to establish a ministry that is touching so many precious young lives today.

I believe that God's work through Kondanani is something profound and that it will have an impact on the entire continent of Africa. It has been my privilege to visit the Children's Village several times to film the fruit of this extraordinary ministry

and to share this with GOD TV's viewers worldwide.

Kondanani truly is an oasis of tranquillity, education, and equipping. The babies are such bundles of joy and I'm sure that among these wonderful young men and women we will find future presidents, doctors, pastors, business people, etc. I see phenomenal integrity, entrepreneurship, and the favour of God through the work of an amazing woman who has such a mother's heart for Africa.

I have known Annie for over twenty-five years and she has been a great blessing to my wife and me. In fact, she brought Wendy to the church where I was leading worship one Sunday morning, and that is how I got to meet my wife!

Wendy and I have seen many miracles of God's provision over the years and I want to tell you that, when we were first starting out, Annie and Lewis came to visit and gave us the first gift we received towards launching Europe's first daily Christian television network. We had nothing but faith, and Annie and Lewis didn't have much either, but we all knew how to trust God!

It amazes me today to look back and see what God has accomplished in our lives as we have stepped out in obedience and we're forever grateful to each person who has stood with us to reach the world through media including this dear pastor and his lovely wife.

We were pleased to bring Annie and Lewis to the UK in April 1996 when GOD TV was just a baby, broadcasting for only three hours a day. They came for the dedication service at Westminster Central Hall. A couple of years later, while I was praying one morning, God gave me a vision of Annie standing with HIV/AIDS orphans in Africa and He clearly instructed me to help her.

I'm thrilled that, by God's grace and the generosity of our partners, GOD TV can now pour into the vision of Kondanani

in a measure beyond what Wendy and I ever thought possible. It is wonderful to think that, as we do this, we are making a real difference in the lives of African children.

I'm reminded of the story of the starfish that were washed up on a beach and of the boy who threw them back into the sea because he knew that if he didn't they would die:

“Young man, don't you realize there are miles of beach and starfish all along it. You can't possibly make a difference!” an older man cautioned.

The young man listened politely. Then he bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it into the sea. “It made a difference for *that one!*” he exclaimed.

Annie is an example of someone who is making a difference, and we can all make a difference as we are challenged by the plight of the individual.

Annie has always had a heart for the downcast. She was a successful businesswoman, but her ministry came first. I remember her days reaching out to help people in the violent township of Alexandra towards the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa. It was a squalid camp, but God equipped Annie to reach out with His arms to people who were suffering. She was His hands, His feet, as the GOD TV family is called to be to a hurting world.

Now look what Annie is accomplishing in Malawi with such excellence. It's so exciting to see the fruit God is bringing forth in her life despite the barriers that have stood in her way. It was a privilege to have known Lewis; he was a real gentleman, a pastor to pastors, and he leaves behind a legacy of faithfulness: “What a *faith-ful* God!” I can still hear him say.

We believe God has called GOD TV, as a media mission ministry, to be a servant to those who minister to widows and orphans, and we rejoice that we have been able to stand

alongside Annie Chikhwaza and the work of Kondanani from the start. As you read her story you will be faced with things that make your heart ache, but, as you see what God has done for her and for these precious children, you will be filled with hope and joy.

Every person who reads this book will be at a different stage of their walk with God. Some may not yet have experienced the love of God or the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; if not, I am sure you will through this book. Others may have served God for years, but be looking to find a renewed vision and encouragement...

Wherever you are on your spiritual journey, I believe that as you turn the pages of *Mother of Malawi* you will be nurtured and changed. You'll also be inspired by Annie's tremendous faith and her selfless example. And you will take strength from the knowledge that what God can do for Rory and Wendy, what he can do for Annie Chikhwaza, He can do for you!

Rory Alec, GOD TV Co-founder and CEO

1



The day of my execution

“IT WASN’T THE END; IT WAS ONLY
THE BEGINNING!”

“Kill her... Kill her... *Kill her!*” screamed the crazed woman leading the mob of African villagers as they rampaged towards Annie and Lewis Chikhwaza’s home. “*Pha... Pha... PHA ...* (‘Kill’),” she shouted in Chichewa, her mother tongue. Armed with tribal weapons, “knobkerries”, machetes, and large sticks and stones, there was no telling what damage they might inflict on the couple’s property, let alone its occupants.

“Kill that white bitch!” Dorothy Chikhwaza ranted with uncontrollable venom and a string of obscenities. “She murdered my brother. She has stolen our inheritance!” Common sense had long since given away to superstition and false accusation, fuelling an intense hatred for her stepmother.

Ordinarily, the village of Bvumbwe, near Blantyre, the former capital of Malawi, was a peaceful rural settlement. Framed by clear blue skies, its dusty farm roads were lined with green fields and shady trees, the hot African sun beating down on the uneven thatched roofs of a myriad of brick huts. The occupants were usually friendly and full of smiles, their children waving, but not today. The tranquillity of the Malawian countryside had been interrupted by maddened cries for death and destruction.

Annie was shocked as she looked out of her front window to see a mob of two hundred armed villagers in the distance. She and her husband, Lewis, had received several death threats, but she had never expected this. The long-standing family feud had reached crisis point and she knew she was in grave danger. “This is the day of my execution” was her ominous evaluation of the developing crisis.

She hurriedly locked the doors of the house and ran to the bedroom she shared with Lewis, locking the door behind her and hiding under their bed. It was 30 September 1996 and Annie had lived in Malawi for barely three years. Already she had accomplished a lot to help alleviate the poverty of the local community, but her husband’s children had never accepted her and now they wanted her dead.

“Is this the end for me?” Annie questioned as she heard gunshots. “Is this the way I’m going to finish up, even though God has called me to serve the people of Malawi?” she thought as she lay under the bed. “Who will help them now?” It was hurtful to think that the people she had tried to help the most had turned so violently against her.

“Annie, Annie?” she heard Lewis shouting, but she knew it was better not to answer because he would try to defend her and they would both be killed. So she kept silent, trying to be calm but praying under her breath beneath the mattress. She wondered whether the watchmen she and Lewis had employed would be able to stop the crowd, but she knew she could not rely entirely on them for her safety, or on the police. She had to trust God as never before.

Moments earlier, the crowd had been whipped into a frenzy by an altercation with the watchmen. The mob were throwing bricks and stones at the guards and hurling anything they could find as they surged forward, trying to grab a rifle.

The gang of villagers was soon out of control and, when

one of the watchmen tried to fire a warning shot, it only made things worse. In the confusion a young pregnant mother was tragically killed, along with her unborn baby, and four people were injured. This made the mob even wilder.

Dorothy instructed a young man to take an axe and kill her father, and the sixty-eight-year-old pastor had to run for his life. Annie had been unable to run away because her back had been broken in suspicious circumstances the year before, and hiding had seemed the safest option.

The Chikhwaza children were furious with their father and stepmother and had hired villagers to assist them in getting rid of the couple. The mob surged forward and surrounded Lewis's car as he dashed into the Bushveld, followed by the axe-wielding teenager.

The mob now started to attack his car. They smashed the windscreen and slashed the tyres, brandishing their pangas, a type of machete with a blade about forty centimetres in length.

Incensed by the death of the young mother-to-be, the crowd of villagers began to attack the house. They smashed the windows and broke down the doors, and eventually found their way to Annie's bedroom.

"Father, I commit my life into your hands," she cried out to God. "If I die today, then I know You have called me home. If I live through this, then I'll know it's Your will for me to continue with what You have called me to do."

Annie was pulled outside by her hair and thrown onto the ground, where her head was beaten and her body repeatedly kicked. Stones were thrown at her, bruising her all over, and her leg was stabbed by a panga, so that blood streamed down into the soil below.

Annie faded in and out of consciousness; her life was ebbing away and had it not been for the timely arrival of the police she would never have survived the ordeal. Even so, the

mob had left her for dead as they quickly dispersed to avoid arrest.

One of Annie's employees, a tailor, had run all the way to the police station to alert them and thankfully two officers arrived just in time, but Annie still had to be rushed to the emergency room of the nearby Agricultural Research Institute. They saw that her life was hanging in the balance so she was quickly transferred to hospital in Blantyre.

Lewis had managed to get away from the young man who was pursuing him with an axe, and was reunited with his wife at the hospital. Annie believes an angel must have tripped the young man up, allowing her husband to escape into the bush.

Lewis would not leave Annie's bedside as the doctors struggled to save her life. It seemed that she had brain injuries, her body was battered and bruised, she had lost a lot of blood, and she was in danger of losing her leg.

"I didn't feel the agony of all this while it was happening," Annie remembers, "although recovery was a painful experience. At the time, it was as if God was cushioning me in His arms. I was in an awful situation, but my foundation was strong. I was able to abandon myself to the only one who could help me, my heavenly Father, because I had come to know Him so well."

Annie felt cocooned in God's love. As she lay in her hospital bed she remembered the silkworms her children had kept, and the protective coatings they had woven. Throughout the attack she had felt a sense of protection. "There was no fear; I was totally reliant on God!" she said.

"Thankfully, God wasn't finished with me. He sent two policemen on their bicycles to save my life. How could two policemen on bicycles think they could stand up to a mob of two hundred?"

When Annie saw those two hundred people surging towards her, she thought it was the end, but it wasn't the end;

it was actually the beginning.

“We have to face difficult challenges like this in life because we are in an obstacle race. We can’t just stop and give up; we have to jump over the obstacles and keep moving towards the finish line.

“An obstacle is there to be overcome. It is there to strengthen you, to bring out God’s character in your life, so that you can continue to fight the good fight of faith.”

... Chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

(Acts 20:23–24)

“God is faithful and His word is true,” Annie affirms. “When He tells you to do something, He will provide for you and protect you. So I was taken to hospital and all I could do was give glory to God. Although I did feel cocooned, there were still times of terrible pain, but I was filled with joy because I was alive!

“I also knew that God was going to do something extraordinary, that out of this near-death experience He would bring forth new life, that where my blood had been spilled on the ground something wonderful would grow out of my suffering.

“God later revealed to me that He would use the land where I had been left for dead to give life to others – that it would become a sanctuary for babies who had also been left for dead, for children who had been rejected. A place of hatred would become a place of love – Kondanani, which simply means ‘Love one another’. He is the great restorer.”

So how did Annie come to be in Malawi?

2



A good little Dutch Reformed girl

“WHO WOULD SHINE A LITTLE LIGHT
IN THE DARKNESS?”

Annie was born in the Netherlands on 26 May 1944, during the Second World War. It was a dark time for Europe and for her parents, Harm and Maaïke Terpstra, as they faced the uncertainty and danger of living under the Nazi occupation.

Annie’s grandmother was Jewish, so her father had to lie low even though he considered himself a Christian. Everyday life was extremely difficult, with soldiers controlling the streets and food being constantly rationed. The newspapers were full of reports of cities being bombed and horrific stories of innocent lives lost, yet there were faint whispers of resistance.

Harm Terpstra risked his life as part of the Dutch Resistance but after the war there were few career opportunities, especially in Friesland, and although he and Maaïke were educated people he had to make a living by delivering bread on his bicycle and she became a maid.

Antje Saakje Terpstra was a lively baby with beautiful blue eyes and a bountiful mop of brown hair, and it was clear from the start that she was going to have enormous character. It wasn’t long before she became affectionately known to everyone as “Annie”.

While most people today consider Annie to be Dutch, she is actually from Friesland, a province in Northern Holland, and