



The happy family



A Family welcome for Joey. Joey's sister, grandmother and brother all take turns at carrying him



By VICKY WANDAWA

Its 3:09pm, Joey finally arrives home to his parents, Desire and George Barugahare. He is fast asleep in his car seat. When his mother tenderly lifts him out of the car, he awakes and squints in reaction to the sunlight.

As she carries him, stroking his face, Joey's two sisters and brother are tagging at her impatiently, signalling they want to see him. She is forced to bow so they can take a look at him. As they look at him, their faces are filled with awe, while Joey looks wondering what the excitement is about.

While his siblings have dashed to the car to receive, there are more people awaiting Joey in the house, a welcome party has been thrown in his honour.

Desire and George's friends and relatives each eagerly wait to take the new bundle of joy into their arms. His sisters Daniele and Makaela beg to hold him, only they are allowed to do so while seated. The glee on their faces can't be missed as they hold him and admiringly look into his eyes.

Desire and George are a Christian couple, with two biological children, and now with Joey, two adopted children. Three years ago, the couple adopted a baby girl from Sanyu Babies Home and on June 17, 2010, they took in a 10-week old boy, Joseph Kristian Barugahare, from Malaika Babies' Home.

"We have two biological children, yet we wanted more. So we opened our home to two more by adopting Makaela and now, Joey. I am excited he is here," Desire says.

Like his wife, George cannot hold back his excitement over his new son. "The final piece of the puzzle has been fitted; we are now a complete family, three girls and three boys. Perhaps when we are old, we will consider adopting more."

He warmly narrates how he and Desire were led to Joey. "We wanted a boy between zero and four months. We went to Sanyu Babies' Home, where three years ago, we had adopted a girl, but they did not have one and that is how we ended up at Malaika Babies' home and found our Joey."

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Joey ended up at Malaika after his mother abandoned him in a taxi. She asked a lady in the taxi to hold him, but she never returned. The lady went to the Police and Joey was taken to Malaika Babies' home," Desire says.

She is quick to demystify the reasons many use not to adopt. One of the reasons people shy away from adoption is the fear of introducing 'bad blood' into their family. Desire is quick to retort, "Imagine your child being called bad blood. It does not matter that they are not yours biologically, the way you raise them is what makes the difference."

George concurs, saying people should brush aside prejudices or issues of "What will people say?", and adopt because they just might be raising a future key leader.

On their experience, George fondly notes, "It's a big but rewarding commitment. When I look at Makaela, the stages she has gone through, she is now three years, it's wonderful." George urges more people to adopt so that more children's lives are transformed.

Desire adds that some may avoid adoption, fearing that they will not be able to love the children. "But it's easy, if you can love your own child, you can love an adopted one."

What's more, Desire believes couples can adopt children even when they have their own. "Find room in your heart, adopt even when you have your own children. If you

have room in your heart, you will find the room in your house."

As the saying goes, like mother like daughter, Laura Ndahura, Desire's mother, has a soft spot for children.

Ndahura, a social worker working with Suubi Children's Homes and says she raised five children who weren't hers. "When Desire and her siblings were young, I brought five orphans to live with us. I am proud of her for taking after me and giving children, who are not biologically hers, a home. I think she gets that heart from me," a proud Ndahura says as she lovingly cuddles her latest grandchild.

She adds that much as orphanages are a good idea, she prefers that each child gets their own family.

Ndahura adds that when she retires from her work with the children, she will take one of them along.

Even with a big heart like her mother's, Desire couldn't have opened her home to adopt Makaela and Joey, had her husband not been supportive of the idea.

"If there is any person I am lucky to have, it's George. He is willing to raise children even when they aren't his. He did not resist it when I presented him with the idea of adoption," Desire recalls.

For George, it's his childhood memories and doing the will of God and that got him excited about adoption. "I am an orphan. I went through the hands of different relatives and was given opportunity. Having come out of such a background, it's easy to for me to decide that I want to help children because I want to give an opportunity to others too."

Interestingly, the couple's two daughters, Makaela and Danielle, look alike they could pass for biological sisters. "When God created her he knew she would be with us, I guess that is why she looks just like my biological daughter. And you know what, Joey will resemble them too," Desire notes.

Lucy Buck, the project director of Child's i Foundation under which Malaika Babies' home is run, is confident that Joey has found a good family.

The couple has agreed to be the face on a campaign to call upon families to adopt.