

# St. NICHOLAS Uganda CHILDREN'S FUND

## Newsletter

March 2012

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"At the end of the day, the children's lunch at school is not paid for, they have no money for scholastic materials or even medication when they fall sick. Thus, they don't feed well, can't sleep well, neither can they have good clothes."

—*The Observer (Kampala), 24 February 2012*



Dear Friends,

There have been many changes in Uganda since we first arrived ten years ago, especially in the capital city of Kampala. Former dirt streets are now paved and traffic lights control major intersections where chaos used to reign. BMWs and Mercedes-Benzes cruise the Northern Bypass Highway together with trucks carrying commodities to Africa's newest nation—South Sudan. High-rise office buildings, shopping plazas, and luxury hotels are springing up throughout the city center. Competition in the mobile phone market has brought high-tech innovation to the consumer. Internet service, available only as dial-up a decade ago, now offers a full range of broadband solutions. A casual visitor would say that Kampala has come a long way in ten years.

What is not immediately apparent to those whose Ugandan experience is limited to hotels, night clubs, and game preserves is that this economic and technological progress has largely bypassed the urban and rural poor. Step off the main road into the slums where our children dwell and nothing has changed. Ramshackle houses and shops are still tightly packed on the slopes of lumpy hills. Pit latrines are still the only sanitary facilities. Women and children are still carrying twenty-liter jerrycans of water morning and evening so they can cook, bathe, and wash their clothes.

In 19<sup>th</sup> century America and Britain, the churches and an emerging middle class developed a social conscience which inspired efforts to improve the lot of orphans, widows, and the working poor. We pray for the same in Uganda, but until that happens, our work continues.



We often are asked if we have any success stories. We don't know how to answer because all of our children are works in progress. Life is so uncertain in the urban slum that we can never sit back and say, "Well, we've taken care of that family. Let's move on to the next!" Serious illness or death can send a stable family into disarray. One of our high school girls, describing the events following the death of her mother, explained why she and her two sisters were living with three different relatives. "The family got together after the burial," Joan said matter-of-factly, "and they distributed us."

### **An Immaculate transformation**

Most of you know that our involvement with each child extends beyond the providing of school fees, uniforms, and lunch. Immaculate's home situation was a cause for concern from her initial interview. The seventeen-year-old arrived with an older sister Lillian, who came only because we insisted on meeting a responsible adult. Lillian managed a bar, dressed like a street walker, and showed little interest in her younger sister's education. By the end of the school year, Immaculate was failing most of her

subjects and her attendance was irregular. When we tried to find out the source of the problem, she was sullen and evasive. A home visit revealed a disturbing state of affairs. Whenever Lillian was short-handed at the bar, she pulled Immaculate out of school to work, including during exams. She would order her to sweet-talk the male customers and then scold her at home for flirting. Immaculate was given no time to study and her academic performance suffered as a result.

We offered Immaculate boarding school on the condition that she repeat Senior 3. She initially resisted the idea and we were afraid we would lose her. Thankfully she chose to swallow her pride, repeat Senior 3, and escape her dysfunctional family. Free from her past and surrounded by new friends, a new and happier Immaculate gradually emerged. She left her sister and went to stay with a grandmother. She completed Senior 4 in November and is looking forward to going to a vocational training institute to prepare for a career in Tailoring & Design.



*Immaculate with Peter*

### **From First Grade to High School**

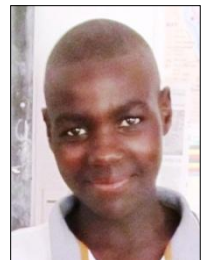
The formation of the St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund began with an old lady and her orphaned grandchildren. Unlike the proverbial woman who lived in a shoe, *JjaJja* knew exactly what to do, at least with regard to the children's education. But with no fewer than ten children living and sleeping in a single room, conditions

were less than ideal. Every one of them has had to repeat a class in primary school, sometimes twice. Every one except Bertram.



*Bertram (center) with four of his cousins in '05*

We enrolled Bertram in Primary 1 in 2005. Not only was he promoted every year, but his performance kept improving. On the national Primary Leaving Exam at the end of P7, he was our top student in the school. When we received the official exam results, we were surprised to see that he had registered himself as "Bertram Peter" for some reason. He has now begun Senior 1 in boarding school. The little boy has become a young man.



Thank you for your support and your prayers. May your Lenten journey lead you to a joyous Easter.

*Peter & Sharon*

We welcome your donations.  
Checks may be sent to:

**St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund**  
**P.O. Box 285**  
**Chardon, OH 44024-0285**

Or you can donate online at  
**[www.ugandachildrensfund.org](http://www.ugandachildrensfund.org)**

**The St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund is a registered non-profit 501(c)(3) organization eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions.**