

St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund Newsletter

April 2021

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"Charity should create wealth rather than perpetuating the cycle of poverty and dependence. In this sense, the best form of charity would be providing quality education for children and more importantly, building a good character in them." —Ravi Shankar



The cycle of poverty, or poverty trap, is a spiraling mechanism that is so binding in itself that it doesn't allow poor people to escape it. It is not merely the absence of economic means. It is created due to a variety of factors, including lack of quality education, insufficient healthcare, and poor infrastructure. Impoverished individuals and families do not have access to the economic, educational, and social resources that would enable them to get out of poverty. The result is that the poor remain poor throughout their lives. In Uganda, where no schooling is free, parents are unable to provide what their children need to succeed academically—tuition, books, school uniforms, shoes—nor can they afford adequate healthcare. The poverty trap leads to generational poverty.

The situation for children becomes more uncertain when they lose their parents. **Yvonne** had been out of school for a year when she came to our office seeking help. After hearing her story, we sought to learn more about the family circumstances. This led to an interview with her paternal grandfather.

Grandpa Joseph, looking older than his sixty years, told us that his son had died three years earlier in a traffic accident, leaving two children, Yvonne and Joseph, with their mother in a village. One week after the burial, the woman left, leaving the children alone in the house. Yvonne was ten at the time and Joseph was six. A

neighbor called the grandparents, and the elder Joseph collected the children and brought them to his one-room house in Kampala. The children's older sister, Sherinah, was already staying with the grandparents and attending secondary school in the city.

The elder Joseph worked as a brick maker, fashioning bricks for construction out of mud from Uganda's clay-rich red soil. He was known in the area and would get called when there was work to be done. He led a team of men who would go to the work site and fill wooden, two-brick forms by hand, then set out the bricks to dry. In a good week, he could earn up to seven dollars.



His wife, Margaret, spent much of her time in her family village, growing food for the household to eat. When she was home, she and her husband shared the single bed, the girls bunked, and young Joseph slept on a couch.

The grandparents did not have the financial resources to pay tuition for all three children, so they prioritized Sherinah's high school education, enabling her to complete Senior 4 (O Level). Yvonne had received a partial scholarship and completed primary school. The cost of secondary school can be three times the cost of primary, so Yvonne was not able to continue to secondary school. Young Joseph had to drop out of third grade and had not attended school for two years.

All three children are now back in school and doing well, especially Joseph. In his first year back in school, he made our Honor Roll every term and was our top performing third grader in 3rd term.



Yvonne & Joseph at home with their grandfather

From Sixth Grade to Sales Executive

Fourteen years ago, a schoolteacher recommended Swaibu to us as a promising student from a home with limited resources. Having lost both parents by the age of nine, he was living with an older brother in small flat owned by a relative. Swaibu had porridge at an Aunt's home in the morning, lunch at school, and nothing in the evening. We supported him through primary school, secondary school, and university. He performed well enough on the national exams to be accepted at the prestigious Makerere University Business School (MUBS) where he earned a B.Sc. in Marketing.

Swaibu is currently employed as a Marketing & Sales Executive for a corporation that manufactures lightweight, heavy-duty bags for agricultural and commercial use. His territory encompasses all of Uganda as well as customers in other East African countries. He is planning to get married in June to another MUBS graduate. We are so pleased with what he has accomplished.



Thank you, dear friends, for your faithful support throughout these unusual and challenging times.

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

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

Uganda COVID-19 Update

As of this date, Uganda's reported COVID-19 cases have reduced to practically nil. Over the past 31 days, there have been 26 new cases and one death. The number of currently infected people stands at 175. All of our university and vocational students are back in school, and the Uganda Ministry of Education has been gradually lifting restrictions on primary and secondary schools with staggered reporting dates. By next week we expect to have our remaining secondary students in class and our remaining primary students by early June. The 2020 academic year will finally complete in July and the 2021 academic year will commence in August with all classes reporting.