

# St Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund

## Newsletter

June 2009

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"As in the rankest soil the most beautiful flowers are grown, so in the dark soil of poverty the choicest flowers of humanity have developed and bloomed."

—James Allen



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### A determined girl.

We knew there was something special about Phiona from the moment we first met her. We perceived a lively spirit that had not yet been broken by the hardships of her twelve-year-old life. These same qualities must also have been noticed by Margaret Nampala, a cleaning lady at the local mission hospital. Margaret had seen the girl in her neighborhood during school hours and in compassion was moved to recommend her to us.

Phiona grew up in a rural village about 75 kilometers from the city of Kampala. Her mother had abandoned her when she was small and Phiona has no memory of her. Her father was a drunkard, incapable of looking after himself or his children. With irregular assistance from relatives, she managed to complete fourth grade (P4) in the local village school. If her education had not been frequently interrupted, she could easily have reached P7.

On her own, Phiona left the village and made her way to the city, hoping for a better future. Had she remained where she was, her prospects were limited to an early marriage and a life of subsistence farming. She'd heard that her father's sister lived in Kawaala, a poor, sprawling neighborhood not far from our office, so that's where she began her search.

Somehow, in this overpopulated urban quarter, she found a woman who knew Aunt Rose and also knew where she

stayed. Rose and her two small children lived in a one-room mud hut she built with her own hands on a small plot purchased with help from a local women's co-op. Rose was willing to take the girl in, but had no money for school fees. With no apparent alternative, Rose hired out Phiona as a housegirl. As is so often the case, Phiona's employer mistreated her and she soon took refuge back with Aunt Rose. It was at this point that Margaret found her and sent her to us.

Based on the primary school's evaluation, she was placed in P3 where she is doing well. We hope that Phiona's will to succeed will endure, and that the courage that brought her out of the village will sustain her throughout her life.



*Phiona: Happy to be in school*

### The hungry genius.

Swaibu was brought to us by his fifth grade teacher at the end of the 2006 school year. She believed the boy could excel at school if only he could attend classes regularly. His uniform was mismatched and worn and his shoes had holes in them, yet he carried himself with quiet dignity.

Swaibu's story is dismally similar to that of many of our children. His mother died when he was five, his father when he was

nine. He stays with an older brother who is studying on scholarship at Makerere University. During semester breaks, the brother does tutoring to earn a little money for their survival. Their flat is owned by an aunt who allows them to stay rent-free, for now.

The teacher's faith in Swaibu was justified. Throughout P6 and P7, he consistently performed among the top five students in his class. Upon completion of the Primary Leaving Exam (PLE), we met with him to discuss his options for secondary school. We can afford to send only a limited number of students to boarding school, and our decisions are based both on academic potential and family circumstances.

We asked Swaibu how his brother managed to provide food while he was attending classes and not tutoring. As it turned out, the answer was "not." Swaibu had milk tea at his aunt's in the morning and lunch at school. There was no supper. It was not difficult for us to reach the obvious conclusion: Boarding School.

Swaibu is now a Senior One (freshman) boarding student at St. Antonios Orthodox Secondary School. His academic results for first term exceeded our already high



*Swaibu on his way to boarding school*

expectations. He ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in his class of 60, achieving Distinctions in nine of fourteen subjects, including an impressive 95% in Chemistry. He also earned solid Credits in the remaining five classes. And, for the first time in many years, he's taking three meals a day, seven days a week.

These are two of the many young lives being dramatically changed through your prayers and generosity. Together, we give them more than an education: we give them hope. May God richly bless you for sharing in this vital ministry.

With love and appreciation,

*Peter & Sharon*

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"The miracle is not that we do this work, but that we are happy to do it." –*Mother Teresa of Calcutta*

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*Primary school girls in new uniforms*

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.