

St. NICHOLAS Uganda CHILDREN'S FUND Newsletter

June 2017

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"Mercy is not inclined to judge on merits but to meet needs; not to search for righteousness but to help the poor."

--St. Ambrose



The empowerment of women has come a long way since we first arrived in Uganda in 2002. Kampala boasts female doctors, lawyers, and businesswomen. Gender parity has been achieved in university admissions and graduations. Women hold positions in the President's cabinet, in parliament, and in local government. Jennifer Musisi is the Executive Director of the capital city of Kampala and Rebecca Kadaga has been Speaker of Parliament for the past six years.

Education is the essential element that enables women to attain success in contemporary Ugandan society. Female university graduates sponsored by the St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund are now productively working in many fields, including education, business, social work, information technology, and medicine. We encourage our young women to reach for the heights and provide them with the means to do so.



University graduates Joan & Veronica Rose

The government of Uganda has passed a number of laws intended to improve the status, safety, and health of women, including mandating equal opportunity, cracking down on domestic violence and human trafficking, and prohibiting the practice of female genital mutilation. However, there is still a big gap between policy and actuality because measures to implement and enforce these laws are sorely lacking. For women at the lowest levels of society, legal protections are virtually nonexistent.

All of our children come from this socio-economic underclass, and we see in their lives the effects of the marginalization of women that is still the norm among the poorest of the poor. These women are vulnerable. Possessing neither education nor marketable skills, they struggle just to feed and clothe their children. There is nothing left for schooling.

Annet's life represents the helplessness of women in her situation. Her husband died of AIDS, leaving her with the HIV virus and two young children, Emmanuel and Esther. She met a man who also was HIV positive and he offered to take her and the children to his home village. This so-called "customary" marriage is common among the poor and it offered her the hope of a stable family life. The relationship was short-lived. Whether due to ignorance or superstition, he insisted that she stop taking the anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) that were keeping her alive. To make things worse, she was pregnant and knew that her baby would need postpartum ARV treatment to prevent transmission of the HIV virus from mother to child.

Annet left him and returned to the city with her children. She works to feed her family by accepting any menial job available. One day she passed by our office and saw us preparing to transport our high school students to boarding school. She applied for assistance for Emmanuel and Esther and we were happy to accept them into our program.



Annet with Emmanuel, Esther, & Baby Resty

The children were thrilled to receive their uniforms, shoes, socks, book bags, and school supplies. They eagerly applied themselves to their studies, and each earned a place on our Honor Roll in the first grading period. Where there once was despair, there is now hope and joy.

There is no safety net of government provided social services in Uganda. Financial disaster is only an accident or an illness away. Up until a few years ago, Teopista had a good life. Her husband, Edward, had a successful charcoal selling business and they were the parents of five children including two sets of twins. Dinah, the non-twin, was the eldest and all five were in school. But then Edward developed intestinal cancer and died on the operating table at Mulago hospital.

Teopista tried to keep the business going, but without access to Edward's wholesale suppliers and lacking his business experience, the enterprise was doomed to failure. As her income diminished, she kept the children in school for another year until the business failed completely. Over the next two years, each child was able to attend only one school term. At fourteen, Dinah should have finished her first year of high school, but she had barely completed sixth grade.



George & Edward, Dinah, Beatrice & Florence

Unable to afford the rent where they were living, Teopista moved to a cheap, one-room flat in our slum neighborhood. That's where Dinah spotted us at the primary school and brought the twins to seek help, and now all five are part of our St. Nicholas family.

Together with all of our children, we thank you for being a caring part of this ministry.

With love and appreciation,

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.



Dinah and the twins are ready for classes to begin.