

St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund Newsletter

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"Childhood, after all, is the first precious coin that poverty steals from a child."

—Anthony Horowitz



The boy who slept under a car

Ian is nine years old. Three years ago, he and his older sister, Faith, lived with both of their parents in that rarest of poor Ugandan households: a nuclear family. Then their mother tragically died; Ian does not remember how or why. An aunt came and took Faith away, leaving Ian to stay with his father. He's never seen nor heard from his sister to this day.

Over the past two years, the father's behavior became more and more erratic. Neighbors recalled that he was beating the boy regularly. At the end, Ian's father went totally mad and was caught running through the neighborhood completely naked. Men who worked at a nearby parking lot apprehended him and turned him over to the police who carted him off to Butabika, home of Uganda's only national mental health referral hospital.

Ian was left alone in the father's mud-brick flat until the landlord eventually came around looking to collect the past due rent. Once the landlord realized he was not going to be paid, he locked Ian out of the house. The parking lot men allowed him to spend the nights sleeping under one of the cars.



The lowly single mother is counted among the poorest, most vulnerable, and voiceless in Ugandan society. She has few resources, no marketable skills, no claim on property, and no protection. In her struggle to survive, she frequently finds herself in untenable relationships which she hopes will lead to some measure of security and a stable family life. It rarely works out that way.

Joyce's story begins in the village. Her mother abandoned her when she was 1½ and she was raised by a grandmother. She became pregnant as a teenager, and the man ran away when Joyce refused to abort. She came to the city with baby Catherine and met Samuel. They produced a child, Kevin, and all seemed well until Samuel died of AIDS.

Catherine was sent to live with Joyce's sister who paid her school fees through primary school from money she earned selling fish near Lake Victoria. Joyce returned to the village with Kevin and found another man. This relationship did not work out so well as the man turned out to be a drunk and a witchdoctor. Joyce left him and returned to Kampala where she found work as a household servant.

Meanwhile, Catherine began her first year of high school. Her education came to an abrupt end when the aunt who was supporting her drowned in the lake. She was forced to drop out of school and came to stay with her mother and three younger brothers. One of our girls, Aisha, was a neighbor and suggested that Catherine come to our office and apply for help. That was how we were introduced to the family.

By now, Joyce's grandmother, the one who raised her, was living with them. Mostly deaf and partially blind, she had been staying with a son until he was arrested. At this time, our single mother, her three boys ages 6 to 11, fifteen-year-old Catherine, and the old Jjajja, were all living in a room originally built to be an attached garage. Joyce and one of the boys are HIV-positive.



The garage apartment

There are two single beds in the room. Jjajja sleeps in one; Joyce, Catherine, and the youngest boy, Raymond, slept in the other. The other two boys, Kevin and Frank, were sleeping on a hunk of foam on the floor.

Joyce gets up at 4:00 each morning to prepare cassava and chapattis which she fries and sells from her home. She scrubs clothes for a neighbor in exchange for electricity to safely illumine her work area until the sun rises at 7:00.

The widow's offering

Joyce worked hard every day and had little to show for it. She was two months behind on her rent and one month away from eviction. Catherine was out of school and so were the boys. Joyce struggled to feed the family, including one of her sons' playmates, a little boy named Ian whose father was mad.

One morning after a heavy rain, Kevin went out looking for his friend and found the house locked up. Ian appeared, drenched, after spending the night under a car. When Joyce learned the story, she brought Ian into her home and informed the local authorities that he was now staying with her. At night he joined Kevin and Frank on the hunk of foam. When we asked Joyce why she had taken in another child when she could barely support the ones she had, she pointed to her heart with tears in her eyes, as if to say, "How could I not?"

Catherine came to us seeking to continue her education and as a result the life of her entire family has been transformed. She is now attending a boarding secondary school and all the boys are in primary school, including Ian. Joyce's rent has been paid, and the children are sleeping on a triple bunk bed, complete with new mattresses, sheets, blankets, and mosquito nets. The hunk of foam has been dispatched to the rubbish heap.



It is you, dear friends, through your support and your prayers, who make this all possible. Thank you!

Peter & Sharon

"Truly I say to you, this poor widow has given more than all the others. For they gave out of their abundance, but she, out of her poverty, gave all that she had to live on."

--Luke 21:3-4

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.