

# St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund

## Newsletter

August 2025

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"The seeds of success in every nation on Earth are best planted in women and children."

—Joyce Banda



### The state of girls' education

Poverty is the greatest contributor to poor outcomes in girls' education in Uganda. More than 700,000 girls between the ages of six to twelve have never attended school. Four of five girls do not attend high school. Twenty-three percent drop out due to pregnancy. Uneducated girls are also at much greater risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Supporting girls through secondary and higher education greatly reduces the chances of early marriage and childbearing.

In rural areas of Uganda, girls are expected to work to increase the family's income. The traditional "bride price" is an incentive for a family to push a daughter into an early marriage, often as young as fifteen. But in the slums of the city where we work, single mothers are eager for their daughters to receive an education so they can escape the crushing poverty under which they themselves struggle. The overwhelming barrier, however, is the cost. After paying rent and finding food for the day, there is nothing remaining for school fees, and even a minor illness can send the family's meager finances into a tailspin.

**The girls in our program**, almost without exception, have been excellent students. They recognize the opportunity they've been given and strive to make the most of it. Not only do they excel academically in high school and university, but after graduation, they move into the professional arena with confidence and self-esteem.

At the end of the final year of high school, students sit for national exams which determine their next level of education. At the boarding school our students attend, two of our girls ranked among the top five in their class of 120 candidates.



**Joan's** father died of a heart attack when she was four years old, leaving her mother with five children and an orphaned sister still in high school. Learning that their mother was skilled as a tailor, we assisted her with a sewing machine which she used to establish a neighborhood tailoring business. She was able to earn enough to support the family, but school fees were beyond her ability to pay.



Joan

While some sponsoring organizations take only one child from each household, we've taken a different approach from the beginning of this ministry. Once we've determined that the need is there, we commit to educating all the children in the family. Joan and her siblings have proved to be an exceptional group. All of them have advanced to higher education, including Daniel, now a Clinical Officer, and Lydia, a Survey Engineer.

Having attained a near-perfect score on the national exams, Joan expressed an interest in going to Law School. She passed the pre-Law exam with ease and now has begun her first semester at Ndejje University, studying for a Bachelor of Laws degree.



Doreen

**Doreen** and her sister, Hellen, were referred to our office by a neighbor who saw that the family needed help. The girls' father had died of prostate cancer the year before and the mother had been supporting the family

by selling charcoal from a shack by the roadside. After the death of her husband, their mother was beaten up and robbed, leaving her with a broken leg which had not healed properly. A neighbor loaned money for Hellen to complete primary school and to recapitalize the charcoal business. Doreen did not attend school for a year, working as a housemaid to help repay the debt to the neighbor.



*The charcoal shack*

Having already missed a year of school, Doreen resumed her studies in Senior 3 when the COVID epidemic closed Uganda's schools after just a few weeks. The COVID shutdown in Uganda lasted eighteen months, the longest school closure in the

world at that time. During this period, we organized private classes, hiring out-of-work teachers to instruct our students. Thanks to their efforts, our children were able to return to the classroom well-prepared to continue their studies. By the end of Senior 4, Doreen had moved up to fifth place among our students. In Senior 5, she ranked second, and finally, in Senior 6, she tied with Joan for first place. Doreen has begun her first semester at Nkumba University, working towards a bachelor's degree in business administration.

### **Rising to the top**

Shakirah is a member of a class of students currently in Senior 4 that has achieved outstanding results since they were in primary school. On the Primary Leaving Exams, she was sixth in a group of nine students who all finished in the top division. She continued to perform very well in high school, but in this highly competitive class she never finished above fourth place until this year. On her latest grade report, she surpassed them all by coming in first among our S.4 students. Her best subject was Math, with a score of 100%.



Shakirah

Thank you for making success possible for these three special young women!

### *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)**

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