

St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund

Newsletter

September 2010

Email: info@ugandachildrensfund.org

"In the poor one can see God."

—Jon Sobrino



Dear Friends,

As we prepare to return to Uganda, our hearts are filled with anticipation. We're looking forward to seeing our children again, and we're eager to get back into the day-to-day activities that are essential to the efficient running of the organization. At the same time, we know that the course of events will not be without its problems and challenges.



Carol

We are caring for over 200 children living in an environment of extreme poverty, and it is almost inevitable that we will encounter tragedy in all its dismal variety: hunger, sickness, injury, abuse, unwanted pregnancy, dislocation, and abandonment. These misfortunes occur among all humankind, but they are particularly devastating to the poorest of the poor. There is no "safety net." Even the traditional family support structures have been undermined by disease, social disintegration, and death.

The oft-repeated statistic (even by us) that poor Ugandan families live on a dollar or two a day can be misleading. It somehow implies that they go to work and at the end of the day they have earned their dollar. The reality for many is that people leave their homes in the morning and move around all day *looking for* work that *may* pay them the dollar they need to give their family a meal that evening. It is by no means certain.

When conducting interviews with parents and guardians, we used to ask, "How much do you spend on food each week?" They didn't know how to answer; the question had no meaning for them. If they had a little money, they ate; if they had no money, they went to bed hungry.

Extreme poverty isn't only about the struggle for food. A miserable one-room flat in our neighborhood will cost the equivalent of \$15 a month at minimum. A landlord will evict a family, children and all, if they fall one month behind; and a prospective landlord demands three months' rent up front. A sick child in need of medical care can seriously impact the home economy, and if the responsible adult suffers a prolonged illness, the family's fragile financial balance is destroyed.



Godfrey

In practical terms, we do what we can to address some of the problems our families face. All of our children receive lunch at school, so they are guaranteed at least one meal on school days. We provide full health care for each child in our program so their guardians won't have to bear that burden. We provide housing and food for our child-headed households. We provide



Roda

housing for families whose adult caregiver is too sick or weak to earn enough to feed the children and pay the rent. We also supply temporary support to help families survive an immediate financial crisis.

None of this requires that we live and work where our children live. We have a capable staff and our being there is not always required for the payment of school fees and the distribution of uniforms, shoes, and school supplies. But there is a reality of ministering to the poor that transcends the mere transference of

material goods from donors to beneficiaries. This is the gift of "presence." The knowledge that we are there with them gives our children and their families an intangible but very real sense of security and well-being.



Florence

We know each child in our program by name and by face. We know their home situations. We know their parents and guardians, their brothers and sisters. We discuss their report cards with them and give them academic guidance. We listen



Vincent

to their problems and help them deal with personal issues. We enter into their world, and this is emotionally risky. Their tragedy becomes our tragedy, but in the same way, their joy becomes our joy.

These children are unique and precious individuals, not an undifferentiated collection of 200+ whose school fees are paid by the St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund. This is why our newsletters usually tell the stories of one or more children *by name*. Our hope is that you, our indispensable partners in this work, may also enter into their world and into their lives. Thus you too may share in their *material poverty* through *poverty of spirit*, and participate in their hope and joy as well.



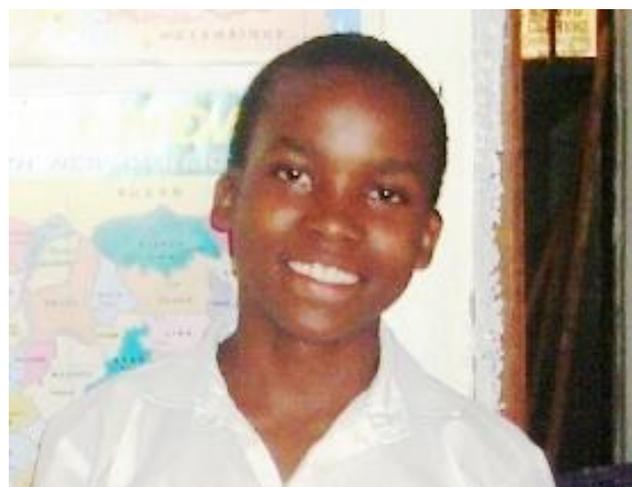
Doreen

Our Primary School Achievers

Not all of our students are brilliant scholars, but it is always rewarding when children who would not otherwise be in school rise to the top of the class. Seventh-grade (P7) is the final year of primary school. In November the students will take a national achievement exam. This year, nine of our P7s are

performing very well. At Namungoona Orthodox Primary School, four girls—Carol, Susan, Noelina, and Doreen—are among the best six in their class of 57 students. Top achievers in other schools are Vincent, Florence, Godfrey, and Roda.

Our P7 star is Emilianos, who has been with us for five years. Orphaned when he was very young, he has no memory of his parents. What makes his performance extraordinary is that he consistently earns the highest possible grade in all subjects every school term without exception. Academically for him, the sky is the limit.



Emilianos

Thank you for caring and for uniting yourselves to their lives through this ministry.

With gratitude,

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.