

St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund

Newsletter

December 2020

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"Resilience is accepting your new reality, even if it's less good than the one you had before. You can fight it . . . or you can accept it and try to put together something that's good." – Elizabeth Edwards



The year 2020, quickly and thankfully coming to a close, has challenged our resilience to a degree that we had not thought possible a year ago when we first became aware of a strange new virus named COVID-19. Since then, its effects have permeated every aspect of the lives of people throughout the world. Ranging from mild annoyance at cancelled vacations, to the devastating effects of family businesses destroyed, to the tragic deaths of loved ones, no one has remained unscathed by the effects of this global pandemic.

Uganda has been no exception. In a country where half the population is under the age of fifteen, schools are a major component of the economy. When the government closed the schools in March, thousands of teachers and administrators lost their source of income. Suppliers of foodstuffs and school supplies lost their customers. Millions of children who were receiving meals at school were now home with parents and guardians who struggled to find the extra food they required. Thanks to your faithful generosity, we have been able to provide support to our most desperate families during this crisis. (See *COVID-19 Update below.*) By necessity, Ugandans have learned to specialize in resilience. This pandemic will pass but the day-to-day struggles of survival continue.

Teopista had raised her children to adulthood and was living alone in a one-room house, earning a meager living shelling beans at Kampala's sprawling

Owino Market. Eleven years ago, her life was changed by the arrival of her three-year-old niece, Patricia. Abandoned by both parents, Patricia became what we call a "virtual orphan." We don't know if Patricia's parents are alive or dead, but Teopista has raised her as her own, managing to educate her at an inexpensive primary school in our neighborhood. Secondary school tuition is far beyond Teo's capacity to pay, which is what brought them to our office.



Teopista's house

During the interview process, we learned that Patricia was not the only child in the household. Three years earlier, Teo's daughter left her own two girls with their grandmother while she went to seek employment on one of the Ssesse Islands in Lake Victoria. Shadia was five years old and Liyat was a toddler. Water taxis on the lake are notoriously dangerous, and the girls' mother drowned during travel. With two more mouths to feed, Teopista made a difficult financial decision and delayed Shadia's education so that Patricia could complete Primary School.



Teo, Patricia, Shadia, Liyat

Teopista faced each new challenge with the amazing resilience we've seen so often in single Ugandan women. Her hope, faithfulness, and perseverance have been rewarded and all three girls are happily enrolled in school.

Nuur's story is not uncommon in Uganda. Facing limited prospects in the village, a young woman comes to the city looking for work. Nuur had a sister in Entebbe who found her a job as a housemaid. She became pregnant and moved to Kampala with the baby's father and his two children from a previous relationship, Moses (13) and Nabulya (7).

Shortly after the birth of a son, the father became ill and went back to his family village to recover or die, having told Nuur nothing about his family or the location of the village. He has not been heard from since. Moses and Nabulya also know nothing about their father's family, nothing about their own mother, or how they came to Kampala. Neither child was attending school.



Having inherited an instant family, Nuur resolved to do what she could to provide food and pay rent for their single room. Each morning she works as a cleaning lady in a local beauty salon. In the afternoon, she roasts maize which she and Moses sell in the neighborhood throughout the afternoon and evening. She hustles to survive, but there's nothing left over for education. A sympathetic neighbor who

was familiar with our work noticed that the children were not in school and referred the family to our office. Impressed with the obvious need and Nuur's unquestioning acceptance of and dedication to her new role as provider, we were happy to welcome Moses and Nabulya into our family.

We are greatly inspired by these examples of individual resilience and are blessed that thanks to your support, we are able to ease the burden of these two remarkable women. May you also be blessed in this joyful season of our Lord's Nativity and let us all pray for a much healthier and happier New Year!

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.

Uganda COVID-19 Update

After a seven-month shutdown, Uganda's schools reopened in October for students in their final year at all levels. We're supporting the primary school in a comprehensive home learning program. We've set up a Wi-Fi facility adjacent to our office so that our university students can participate in online lectures. We're printing learning materials for our secondary students and have hired laid-off teachers to conduct classes in essential subjects. As our most vulnerable families turn to us for help, we've been assisting with food, rent, and medical expenses.

Uganda statistics to date:
27,532 positive cases; 221 deaths.