

St Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund

Newsletter

April 2007

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If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and you say to them, "Go in peace, be warm and well fed," but do nothing about their physical needs, what good is that? (*James 2:15-16*)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Kristo Azukidde! Ky'amazima Azukidde!

While living and working in a developing country, we confront many and varied challenges. In the past month alone, we have endured days without electricity, without water, and without phone service (no internet!). Few of the roads in our neighborhood are paved, so we travel through clouds of red dust, or when it rains, sliding over ruts of red mud. However unacceptable these conditions might be in America, here they are minor inconveniences.

The authentic trial we face daily, the burden that tests the very fiber of our souls, is to enter into and share the struggles and suffering of those whom we have been called to serve. The magnitude of poverty that surrounds us is incomprehensible to most Americans, as it was to us before we came to Uganda. To illustrate, let us share the story of two children in our program who are blessed with a pretty good home situation compared to many others whose smiling faces have appeared in previous issues of this newsletter.

Moses and Barbara live with their mother in a two-room flat, together with an older child that mom took in out of compassion. Their day begins at 5:00 am. They bathe with cold water from a basin, put on the school uniforms they washed the night before, and go to fetch water in plastic jerrycans. If mom has managed to save a little sugar, they have weak tea for breakfast and leave for school in the dark. Traversing swampy alleyways and dusty hills for almost an hour, they arrive at school by 7:00. There are about eighty kids in each classroom, and their day of learning will extend to 6:00 pm. At lunch time, every single day, they are served *posho* (corn-meal mush) and red beans. They eat with their fingers out of cheap plastic dishes.

At the end of the day, Moses and Barbara arrive home in the dark, wash their uniforms and socks, and take a simple supper prepared by a loving mother. They do their homework by the light of a bare bulb (on nights when the electricity is working), say their prayers, and go to bed, sharing a tattered foam mattress on the floor.



Barbara and Moses

This is a good life. They have a mother who cares for them and would go without food herself rather than deny her children. She takes an active interest in their school work, and sees that they attend Sunday School and Liturgy every week. As students in our program, they never have to worry about being sent away from school for lack of fees. When they're sick or injured, their medical bills are paid.

For the sad majority of children in the urban slum, life is much more difficult. Often both parents are dead and they stay with a grandmother, aunt, or stepmother in an extended family of a dozen or more children. Food is scarce, school fees are unthinkable, clothing is cast-off rags, shoes are non-existent. They sleep on papyrus mats spread on a cement or packed dirt floor.

For the more than 160 children currently assisted through the St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund, there is now a small measure of security after the uncertainty of their impoverished past. They now have hope for the future and the awareness that someone cares about them. Much of our work is routine. We purchase and distribute school supplies. We pay the accumulated hospital bill every month. We make sure each child has a uniform, socks, and a sturdy pair of black leather shoes. We counsel and advise our P7 students as they prepare to make the transition to secondary school.



"Shoe Day"

Sometimes more serious intervention is required. We've had to deal with child abuse and neglect by overstressed stepmothers, children seriously burned in cooking accidents, broken bones, and unintended pregnancies. There are always discipline issues, but perhaps the most incorrigible children are the ones most in need of love and acceptance.



A few of our high school students

St. Gregory of Nanzianzus encourages us to "be as God to the unfortunate, by imitating the mercy of God. For in nothing do we draw as close to God as in doing good to man."

Thank you for helping us to help these children and their families. None of this would be possible without your love and your financial support. Please continue to pray for us and for God's children.

Peter & Sharon

We welcome your donations.
Checks may be sent to:

St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund
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