

St. NICHOLAS Uganda CHILDREN'S FUND

Newsletter

December 2019

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"People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege."

– David Livingstone



A sister's sacrifice

Sheila was two years old when her mother died of AIDS. Her father succumbed a year later, making orphans out of Sheila and her ten-year-old sister, Justine. A relative of their father reluctantly took the girls into her home, but it was far from a loving relationship. It's not uncommon in Uganda for AIDS orphans to be considered under a curse, as if they somehow are to blame for their parents' deaths. There is also the fear factor: Perhaps the children are also carrying the virus and, in time, will bring down the entire household.

After two years of mistreatment, a friend of the family brought the girls to Kampala and found work for Justine, now twelve. Sheila was ready for school and Justine used her meager earnings to pay school fees for her sister. Tragedy followed a few years later when the lady died. Her husband didn't want the girls in the house and once again they were on their own.

While in Kampala, Justine had found a sympathetic friend who was a teacher in a private school not far from the city. This teacher persuaded the school's director to hire Justine as a kitchen helper, but the school was not willing to allow Sheila to enroll there free of charge. Justine struggled through her teenage years to pay her sister's fees at an inexpensive primary school, giving her an opportunity that she could never have. Sheila did not disappoint, and graduated near the top of her class.



Justine and Sheila at home

Hoping to land a better job in order to continue Sheila's education, Justine moved them back to Kampala where she found work serving food at the city's sprawling Owino market. She tried enrolling Sheila in secondary school, but it was all she could do to buy food and pay the rent on their one-room flat. Sheila dropped out in the first quarter and worked as a housemaid for the rest of the school year.



The food stalls at Owino Market

By God's grace, one of our high school girls was a neighborhood friend of Sheila's and suggested that she come to our office and tell her story. We interviewed Sheila and Justine and visited the room they were renting. As the narrative unfolded, we were deeply moved by Justine's sacrificial resolve to care for and educate her little sister. It was not a difficult decision for us. In January, Sheila will be joining our family as a new secondary school student.

A Grandmother's love

In Uganda, no matter how stable and secure things appear, tragedy is never very far away. Grace's son Jjuuko worked as an auto mechanic. He and Sylvia and their daughter Miracle comprised something rare among Kampala's poor—a nuclear family. Jjuuko built a small house for his mother and installed a water tap so she could earn a little money selling water to neighbors.

Sylvia became pregnant again and went to her family village to deliver the baby. When relatives brought newborn Peace to Jjuuko's home, they also conveyed the heartbreaking news that Sylvia had died in childbirth. Grace took charge of the children and her son continued to work to support them all. Although she was sixty-three, by God's mercy she was able to breastfeed Peace while also caring for two-year-old Miracle.

Seven years later, misfortune struck again. Jjuuko was working under a car when the jack slipped and the vehicle dropped, crushing him and causing irreparable damage. Jjuuko died shortly thereafter, leaving Grace with the two girls.



Grace sells a twenty-litre jerrican of water from her tap for the equivalent of five cents. She barely earns enough to keep food on the table for the three of them. Miracle and Peace wear the same second-hand clothes every day until their ragged

clothes become threadbare. There is no money for school. When a concerned neighbor sent them to us, the girls had not seen the inside of a classroom for the past two years.

Yet in spite of all the sadness and struggle, there is joy in this household. Jjajja Grace, Miracle, and Peace are joined together by bonds of unconditional love.



We are both humbled and inspired by these examples of devotion and sacrifice. Grace and Peace to you during this holy season, and perhaps a Miracle, too!

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

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Sisters