

ChildLine

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The newsletter of the Uganda AIDS Orphan Children Foundation

www.UAOCF.org

UAOCF's 10th Anniversary

This year marks ten years since UAOCF first began the work of changing children's lives. We wanted to share how much we have accomplished in this time, and how you have made it possible. Bishop Callist, the Chairman of the Kabale Diocese Orphaned and Vulnerable Children Project, sent us a letter of congratulations that describes this beautifully. Here are some thoughts he shared:

"You have truly been parents to many who never knew a parent, and many who would have languished in the ashes of destitution, but are now able to read and write; and yes, some have climbed the ladders of higher education and the journey continues.

"This is the difference you have made for our children: Over 450 children have benefited from your generous support and gained access to quality education... One example is Ivan Irankunda from Kanungu district, who has been the best performing student in his class from primary two to primary 7. Maria Bridget has been ranging from 1st to 3rd position in her class. Beda from a very remote village scored highest in the Primary Leaving Examination standardized test and is now student at St Paul Seminary where he is still doing very well.

"UAOCF has not only changed the lives of children, but also the communities where the children study and live. Most profoundly, the UAOCF has eased an enormous burden of tuition for a community that lives on 2 dollars a day! Tuition money does not only sustain a child

in school, but also helps to build the local economy – salaries for teachers, payment for all kinds of vendors and the list goes on and on...

"Social benefits are also very evident: The foster home program has re-connected children to their relatives and opened the hearts of many, as families have provided a home for children they didn't even know, among other benefits.

"Last but not least, UAOCF has touched the soul of the nation: Education, which is Uganda's number one investment in her future. Your children and their future clearly manifests that you will forever remain an invaluable part of our nation's spirit. And your fruits speak for themselves."

They do indeed. For ten years of generosity and love, and for hundreds of children's lives changed, we thank you.

Hope (House) Springs Eternal

It has been quite some time since we have been able to provide an update on Hope House, our planned technical school intended to help our students and others in the community gain meaningful employment. As you may recall, UAOCF sought a partnership with the Salesians, whose mission of helping poor children focuses on helping them learn a trade. This mission is embodied in the Salesians' well-established track record of building and running trade and agricultural schools throughout the world.

This partnership seemed like a perfect fit, and with the Salesian's nearest province (and its director, the Provincial) just an hour away over the border in Rwanda, we thought we were on our way. After consulting with the Provincial, we were very encouraged; with tremendous support from people like you, we purchased the ten acres of land that the Salesians required. Then we waited. And waited some

more. Some of the delays were due to the terrible hurricane that devastated Haiti, where some Salesian teachers lost their lives. There were additional delays when a new Provincial was installed. We were discouraged but we never lost hope. It's safe to say that's one thing we never run low on here at UAOCF.

As recently as the end of July, at the dinner held to celebrate our tenth anniversary, the update we received from Uganda was noncommittal: the new Provincial was expected to visit the Hope House buildings and grounds. That didn't seem terribly different from reports we had received before. But good things do come to those who wait.

On August 1, the new Provincial visited Kabale accompanied by the Assistant Provincial and the Treasurer. They were very impressed with what they saw and reported that they thought it would be a good place for them to have a presence. Upon receiving this news, Fr. Fred Byaruhanga, UAOCF's Executive Director, happily exclaimed, "I think it's going to happen!"

What are the next steps? The Salesians will have a Council Meeting

where they will make a final decision. Fr. Fred anticipates that we will receive the final word by mid-September. What exactly happens after that, and how quickly it happens, will be decided in close collaboration with the Salesians.

To say that we are excited by this development barely begins to describe how we feel! Finally, after years of delay, our dream of giving our children concrete vocational skills to support themselves – and to more closely link their wellbeing with that of their larger community – is within reach. We know many of you must have shared the same frustration and impatience that we have felt during this process. Thank you for hanging in there, for standing with our children and refusing to abandon them. We can't wait to share photos of Hope House's opening day.

Patience, persistence and perspiration
make an unbeatable combination for
success.
-Napoleon Hill

What Does It Mean to Be an Orphan?

If a child only loses one parent, is that child really an orphan? Yes, that's what virtually all major international development agencies say. Even if one parent is still alive, the loss of the child's other parent is devastating, particularly in the extreme poverty in which so many of UAOCF's children live. Doreen's story is a classic example.

Doreen is twelve years old. She is the third of five children: she has one brother and three sisters. She would have had a second brother but he died shortly after he was born. So did her mother, who had AIDS. Those were the dark days, as Doreen

recounted in a letter she wrote to her UAOCF sponsor:

"The best times in my primary (school) is when I got a friend, that's you... You paid my school fees. At that time, I knew that I have got a friend. And you are a friend indeed.



My worst times in primary is when I lost my mother and brother... It was a very difficult moment for our family and my father had no money and he really couldn't afford our needs. I really never knew that I would get a friend like you who solved my problems... I never knew that I would finish my primary level, (not) without your help."

Doreen has worked hard to succeed in school. She works hard at home, too, spending her holidays doing laundry and dishes. She is thankful for everything she has been given and dreams of a bright future; we are confident she'll make it happen. One might wonder how a child who has suffered so much finds such strength. We know where: she gets it from a friend.



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Future plans: The next ten years?

With our first decade behind us, we continue to look ahead and plan new programs and projects. In addition to Hope House, we have some other exciting ideas that we hope to bring to fruition in the near future:

◇ Dedicated vehicle. Currently, UAOCF has no regular transportation for our staff and children's needs. Our staff must make at least six trips to each of our 28 schools every year, and the only vehicle available is a borrowed car. In addition, if a child has a medical emergency or other need that requires immediate transportation, we have no reliable means to meet

that need. Therefore, we are raising money to purchase a 15-passenger van. The estimated cost – which includes a 50% import tax! – is \$55,000. We have raised about \$33,000 so far and are hoping to secure grants and donations for the remainder.

◇ Piggery project. Through this project, children will raise pigs for sale, which will provide money for advanced education and teach entrepreneurial skills. The community also benefits from the educational component of the program. The project has not progressed past the initial planning stages yet, but we will be applying for grants to support it soon. The new vehicle will facilitate the work

tremendously.

◇ Mentoring program. We plan to develop a program to match some of UAOCF's high school and advanced education students with younger students facing challenges with their school performance. This will help the struggling student and also give the older student a sense of accomplishment and a chance to give back.

Stay tuned for updates on these and other projects!

To adopt a child (\$350 a year) or donate any amount, please send a check (payable to UAOCF) to: P.O. Box 64485, Los Angeles, CA 90064. You can also call 310-479-8396, or use your credit card to donate via our website: www.UAOCF.org.