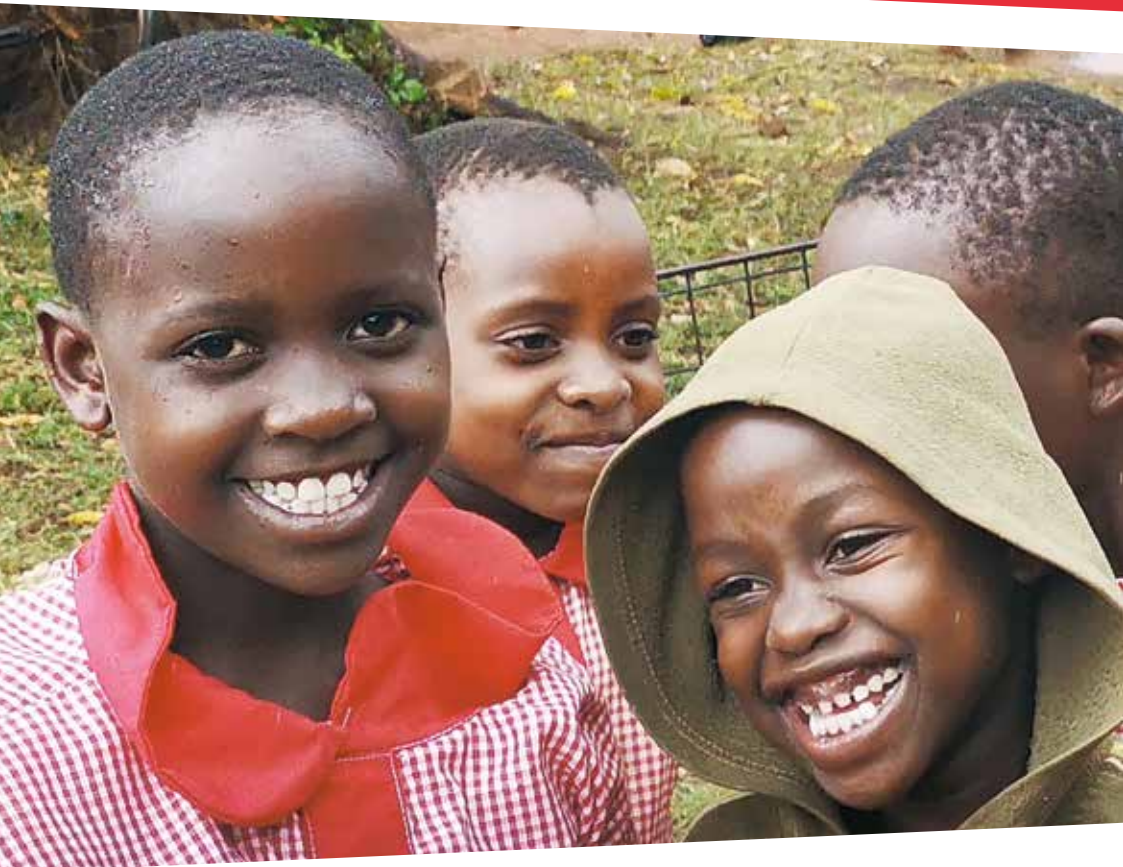


Abaana News

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Issue # 32



**ABA
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**Bringing Hope to the
Children of Africa**

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Life Under Lockdown in Uganda



As dictionaries across the world have been rewritten with phrases such as 'social distancing' and 'flattening the curve,' the word 'lockdown' will forevermore be remembered as a time of great challenge by Ugandans.

Like the majority of the world, Uganda entered a state of lockdown and they did so early, closing the airports on the 22nd March - before even the first local cases were confirmed. The aim was to keep the virus out of the country. Group meetings and schools were shut, transport was banned and many businesses severely restricted, with only shops selling food or other essentials allowed to stay open.

Many Ugandans run very small-scale businesses. One of our choir children's parents was experiencing challenges during the lockdown which was typical of many urban, working adults. She runs a small food kiosk providing basic meals. The lockdown curfew meant she could not work and had no money to pay for the family's needs. She commented, "Life has become very hard. I used to earn a little on a daily basis and this helped me and my family to live a relatively fair life, but now without the little income, life has become so hard."

There is no furlough scheme or benefit system in Uganda, so when you lose your income, your only hope is the generosity of people who can step into the gap! The question on many Ugandans' lips is 'how long will this last?'

What is the current situation?

(Correct at time of print)

What we have all learnt in the last six months, is how quickly things can change. In Uganda, at the end of June, there were fewer than 1,000 reported cases in a population of 42m, and no Covid-19 related deaths. Most of the new cases were traced to people coming in from neighbouring countries. It seemed to be under control, but there was also a fear that many cases were not being reported or detected, while other African countries, like South Africa, were seeing a large rise in cases.

Today, we are currently seeing a rise in cases in Uganda. In the later part of August and early September, there was an average of 150 new cases a day with the total cases hitting 6,000 and rising. This is still relatively low per population, but for a country with less than 55 functional ICU beds going into this pandemic, there is fear about how they will cope. With local people already exhausted with the effects of lockdown, there is a real concern that the worst of Covid-19 is yet to come.

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Huge Thanks for Donating £60,000 to our Covid-19 Appeal

Thanks to our generous donors, our Covid-19 appeal has raised an incredible £60,000 to date. We have been amazed by the generosity of our supporters. Here are some of the ways in which your donations have been able to help support those most in need:

50,000 meals bought for families connected to our schools

Our team met with Joyce, the mother of one of our sponsored children. She told us, "Today I am very happy for the provision my family has received. I have seven children to feed and it has been a hard task."

Like many in rural Uganda, Joyce lives off the land and has no regular cash income. With the lockdown making it more difficult to buy food, local prices have started to rise with many reports of families surviving on very little food. Joyce said, "Today I am grateful for what God has done. Traders came from neighbouring towns to buy food from here, which makes food prices go high and hence they are unaffordable for the poor. I pray that God may continue to bless Abaana."

Abaana is continuing to assess the needs on the ground and planning further food support.



Huge Thanks for Donating £60,000 to our Covid-19 Appeal

Supporting over 200 street children through Covid-19 lockdown

Alongside our support of the New Life Homes, our social workers regularly engage with the children living on the streets. They became aware of the urgent needs of these children during lockdown. When the city was busy, the children could blend in and find some form of living from the scraps of businesses and passersby. As Uganda went into lockdown, the city became

quiet and these children became even more vulnerable.

An emergency shelter was set up at a school in Kampala and Abaana partnered with Kampala City Council to care for these children, providing food, bedding and other supplies. Vicent Tugume, (a former New Life Homes boy), represented Abaana at the shelter and worked with the children.



Abaana was given the responsibility for 11 of these boys who all wanted to return home to their families. The boys at first came into the New Life Homes while Abaana social workers made preparations to assess their home environments.

We are delighted to report that all 11 boys have been resettled and the families of the boys also received a relief parcel.

David and Julius, who are brothers, were among the 11 boys taken in by Abaana. Our social worker met with their father when doing a home visit, who said, "Thank you Abaana for supporting my family during the Covid lockdown with a food package. With the lockdown, life has been very difficult for us here with no food to feed my children. My two boys were missing on the streets and I could not imagine how they were surviving. But when I saw Abaana returned my children I was so happy; may God bless you!"

Vicent Tugume with some of the boys at the shelter



David, Julius, Abaana's social worker and the boys' father

Huge Thanks for Donating £60,000 to our Covid-19 Appeal

Abaana Helping Children Study at Home Through Covid

With schools currently closed and waiting for direction from the government, most children across Uganda are not receiving any education. Abaana has distributed home learning packs to 2,400 children across our school communities. The children work through exercises and return them to the schools for the teachers to mark.

Kevin Amodoi from Matthew Cardwell School said, "It has been hard to learn since schools were closed because we don't have a radio or television at home to keep up with the lessons being conducted by the government. I am very happy that these booklets are going to help us to study at home. Thank you Abaana."

Nabuunga Swabullah, who was expecting to sit her Primary 7 leaving exams this year, said, "Some of us had lost hope of studying since schools are taking long to reopen. However, I am happy to see that Abaana has brought us self-study materials and encouraging us that we need to study instead of just playing at home. Thank you so much!"

We are so thankful to all who have given so generously to our Covid-19 appeal. As we look forward there is more that we would like to do with your help!

Are you up for the challenge?

Help raise more funds for our Covid-19 Appeal through our 6,000 Miles Challenge! Visit abaana.org/6000 for more details.

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Sponsorship - A Journey of Two People



One of the joys of being the Sponsorship Co-ordinator is to see the wonderful stories that emerge when a child has been sponsored throughout their education.

Recently, we received a photo of Miriam Mattese who had graduated with a diploma in orthopedic medicine. Miriam's sponsor, Monica, has been with her every step of the way. These are her words: "Sponsoring a child, as I discovered, benefits both sponsor and child. Miriam has been able to fulfil her own dreams and I have been humbled by the energy and the effort she has made of her opportunity of education. The joy and pleasure I've received from seeing a young child who could only draw little flowers and pictures, growing into a young woman who is working as a dispenser in a chemist and obtained a diploma that has allowed her to be a Certified Orthopedic Officer, has been immense."

Sponsorship, for me, was about giving someone the key to an education so that they could make their own choices and have a voice. It has also become a journey of two people, connected across the miles."

Monica Judson

If you would like to consider embarking on this special journey of sponsorship, then please do get in touch with me: chris@abaana.org or phone the office on 02891 451918 and I will gladly share more with you.

"I am forever grateful to God that I was sponsored through Abaana. I have experienced love, care, and support - a thing I had never thought of in my life. My parents did not have good jobs to keep us in school, so the future was uncertain, but my hope was rebuilt because of the intervention. Here I am today as an Orthopaedic Officer and I believe I will go even higher with my career. Thank you for changing my life and may God bless you."

Miriam Masette in 2020



Monica Judson



Miriam in 2004



Sponsorship is an Investment in Bringing About Change

CHRIS HOLLIES

"I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept." **Angela Davis - American author, 1944.**

Uganda is a country of great contrast. On the one hand, it is such a beautiful and rich country visually, with lush, green vegetation and wonderful people. But on the other, there is poverty at the most minimal of levels. It is clear that things need to change.

Sponsor child Paul Ssekibuule and his family



In February, I had the privilege of returning to Uganda on my second trip, this time wearing my 'Abaana hat'

During the trip, I got to visit a number of schools that Abaana supports and met many of the children sponsored by our generous donors.

As we visited the homes of some of the sponsored children, I was shocked to see just how hard life can be. Reality hit home when we met with Paul's mother who explained that last year, due to various diseases including tomato blight (a perfectly preventable disease in the UK), their crops had failed. This had left the family in great poverty, unable to earn enough to make ends meet and life had become a daily hand-to-mouth struggle.

But perhaps an even bigger 'pain' for me was in meeting one of her sons, aged 16, who had dropped out of school to help out at home. He had achieved no qualifications and hence had little hope of knowing a future better than that of his parents.

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It is rare to come face to face with genuine hopelessness and it sends a shiver to the soul, but there I met it. At such moments, we face a choice - to either walk away and ignore the experience, or allow the reality to galvanise our determination to do something about it.

Gladly, the latter choice gripped me more and underpinned my determination as the Child Sponsorship Coordinator for Abaana, to keep doing what we can, with your help, to ensure that children have access to a good education. It simply isn't good enough to see children reach the age of 16 with little hope of anything better than subsistence living. Things must change for these children, their families, their communities and their nation.

Can it be done? Absolutely! The evidence for my total belief in this can be found in a number of the Abaana alumni we met during our trip. These are children, now young adults, who have been sponsored through their education and are now emerging on the other side with degrees and qualifications.

I was able to interview some of them on video and one question I asked them all was, *"If your sponsor were here now, what would you like to say to them?"*



Some of the Abaana alumni

Each one replied with honest heartfelt thanks and one young man, who shall live long in my memory, broke down in tears as he delivered his thanks to his sponsor.

Meeting these young people and clearly seeing the change in their lives that sponsorship has enabled, has underpinned for me just how important education is in the life of a child.

And so, we continue to learn and continue to be a catalyst for change through education, one life at time.

Sponsorship costs just £24 per month.

For more information on how you can help bring about change through sponsorship, please contact: chris@abaana.org or visit the website abaana.org

Lockdown Lessons for the New Life Homes

How has Covid-19 impacted Abaana's New Life Homes?



NLH boys continue their school work safely at the homes

In the same way as many other parts of the world, Uganda entered a state of lockdown, attempting to quell the spread of Coronavirus. Classroom lessons ceased, children were sent home with work-books clutched to their chests and home schooling began.

As there was no other safe place for them to live, 11 of the NLH boys remained in Abaana's care at the homes. Here are some of their thoughts about living in lockdown:

Yusufu likes extracurricular activities. "I love playing football, Ludo and Snakes and Ladders. I'm also spending more time in the garden and we have planted onions, carrots, potatoes and aubergines. Our house Mamma says she will teach us how to cook with them once they are harvested! Lately a phonics teacher has been allowed to come to teach us and

these classes have really improved my reading."

Nicholas says, "We no longer go to school or to church. Teams from Northern Ireland and visitors no longer come to NLH as usual. Strict rules have been given to us by our uncles and aunts, like 'no movement or going to gatherings.' We now study from NLH instead of going to school. We also conduct our church services from home instead of going to church, which has been closed."

"I am really thankful that we are being kept safe, but I am sad because I miss my friends at school and my teachers. I also miss the community of our church family and I don't think we will get to go to Scripture Union camp this year, which is the only holiday we ever get."



Douglas making masks

Support of Resettled NLH Boys

Some of the NLH boys, who had already been successfully resettled in their family homes, returned to spend their lockdown time there. Some are living with parents, others with grandparents or aunts and uncles.

Each household was provided with a food relief package, which included rice, posho (a local staple food made from corn), beans, sugar, cooking oil and soap. During the initial visits, the children were supported to plan for their home schooling through revision and reading resources and school web links for those who were able to access the internet.

Arnold had just begun Primary 7 at Juliana Primary School where he had been boarding when lockdown came

into force. He was settled with his mother in her rented home, in the east of Kampala. Her source of income was cut off during lockdown as she used to purchase fresh food from the villages to sell at the market in town. She has been very thankful for the donation of food from Abaana and study materials for Arnold.

Thanks to our supporters and sponsors, Abaana has been able to provide food and extra study materials for these boys who formerly lived on the streets.

Some of the boys have lost sponsorship over the last few months. If you are able to commit to sponsoring one of them for £24 per month, please contact **louise@abaana.org** or visit the website at **abaana.org/nlh**



Arnold (right) and his brother, Kasango

From School Lockdown to the Dream of a New School

After being told that you can't go to school for six months, wouldn't it be amazing to come back to the news that you're getting a brand-new school?

For potentially the first time in history, across the world there are hundreds of millions of children missing school! And in doing so, missing their friends, missing their teachers, and helping parents understand how important schools are not only for education, but also for the mental health of their children.

As lockdown eases here, schools are attempting to find a 'new normal.' Our children receive the opportunity to reunite with friends and their learning moves back to the classroom. However, for many children across Africa,

their classroom is simply a shack which is more suitable to housing animals than people.

Abaana schools are currently helping to educate an estimated 4,500 children, and in doing so are providing them with a great opportunity to break free from the poverty cycle. However, there are still many villages across Uganda which have no school or a very poor school structure with untrained teachers trying their best to educate the children with little or no resources.

In 2018, we visited some schools in the east of Uganda and thanks to funds raised by the New Life Choir and other donations, we hope to start building the first section of Atukubui Primary School early next year.

Atukubui Primary School is a community school under the Church of Uganda. The school lies on seven acres of land belonging to the Church. It started in 2014 after the realisation that there were a large number of children who had no school to attend or had to travel long distances to get to school.

The school runs from Primary 1 to Primary 5 and currently has six teachers. When we visited the school, there were 270 children studying in a very poor structure.

The first phase of a school building project is to build a three classroom block with offices costing around £31,000. We are trusting that with funds we hope to raise from our 6000 Miles Challenge, we can do even more.



Abaana is looking for partners who can help partially fund or fundraise towards the general school building. Are you up for the challenge?

If you would be interested in supporting, please contact the office on: 02891 451918.



Help fund Atukubui by taking part in the 6000 Miles Challenge

Funded	3 Classroom Block with Offices	£31,000
Needs Funded	4 Classroom Block	£29,000
	2 Blocks of Latrines	£11,000
	Furniture (Tables for Teachers and Children)	£5,000
	Painting	£3,000
	Water Harvesting (guttering, storage tanks)	£1,000
Total		£80,000

The Inequality of Equals

 SAM DEAKIN

As I sat on the 11-hour plane journey back to the UK following ten days in Uganda, I was surprised by how quickly my world had changed. On the way to Entebbe Airport at around 10pm, I watched through the car window as people attempted to sell produce to the passing cars, desperate to sell anything so that they would have enough money to buy food the next day. Just a couple of hours later and I was sitting on a plane watching the latest movies and being handed food and drink of my choice.

What have I done to deserve this?

In just ten days, I realised that what separated me from a life of poverty and a life of wealth was simply where I was born. I met hundreds of children in Uganda who looked at me in the same

way that we, here in the west, might look at celebrities. Desperate to wave at me, shake my hand, and listen to my words.

"Rich and poor have this in common: The LORD is maker of them all" - Proverbs 22:2

God has created us equal and yet we, as humans, have allowed such inequality.

When we visited Atukubui Primary School, the next school Abaana plans to develop, we were met by hundreds of joyful children, parents and teachers. We were quickly ushered into the few chairs that they owned and were given a sealed bottle of water. I felt deeply uncomfortable drinking this water in front of the children, knowing that they have to walk miles to get theirs, probably from an unclean source.

Sam with Teddy Akullo, Headteacher of Atukubui Primary



What have I done to deserve this?

During the trip, one of the hardest parts was meeting children who were living on the streets of Kampala. They had been kicked out or had run away from their homes and families. Some were as young as seven! Even harder was seeing them desperate for food, some high on drugs with one boy even drinking aviation fluid to numb the pain he was in.

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I later visited Abaana's New Life Homes, a place where children who are rescued from the streets of Kampala come to live while the staff seek to contact their families about returning home. At the New Life Homes, they have access to food, hygiene facilities and education - all possible because of donations to Abaana. I was introduced to 17 young boys who had been rescued from a life on the streets. I heard their stories; I heard their pain; I heard their struggles. But the best part was hearing of their redemption. Lives made by God! Lives committed to God! Lives significantly changed!

It was their stories that taught me that people like you and I can have a life-changing impact on the lives of such children.

I am convinced more than ever, that sponsoring a child radically changes their lives. I would encourage anyone to sponsor a child and I also would urge them to share their story with their friends and family so that they too may consider sponsoring a child.

What have I done to deserve the riches I have? Absolutely nothing. What can I do with what I have to help them? So much. Let's break the chains of poverty together!



Street Child in Kampala

Scott, Sam, Chris, NLH boys and staff



Child Sponsorship Christmas Gift Scheme

Every Christmas we buy practical gifts for each of the sponsored children

Please do not send a parcel to Uganda this Christmas. Due to Covid-19 it may not arrive

To see this year's gifts and donate to the scheme (or send a cheque), please visit abaana.org/christmas



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