

FOCUS MULAGO CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER PROJECT

BI-MONTHLY REPORT-MARCH-APRIL 2009



In this report we look at what has been happening during the months of March and April. We appreciate your involvement with us in whichever capacity you are. In this issue of reports, I have included a Parent/caregiver section to give you a glimpse in the lives of some of the people who look after the children we work with. Included as well is a report from two Christian Union students who work with us whenever they can get away from Campus which is mostly every Saturday. The children's section remains. Even though we had many topics to write about, all the children wanted to write about jokes and brain teasers they know which is what their section is about. We would appreciate

getting feedback from you about reports we send out so we can know what kind of information you would prefer to know about. During this period;

We had training for parents and caregivers on learning disabilities (24th April). We learnt that;

- There are still many myths and negative attitudes to any form of disability. Hence the children are hidden away if possible, not taken to school ...
- Women are most blamed for any form of disability. A disabled child is enough grounds for divorce or blame for infidelity
- We have very few places where help for such children can be got.

By the end of the training, participants had more information of how to help children with certain disabilities at home, where to seek for help, and some of the myths had been demystified. We all recognized the need for more of such trainings to be organized in the community.

4 New children joined the project during this period

CHRISTIAN UNION STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

We had a lot more student visits from Christian Union students. On two separate Saturdays the Makerere University Christian Union Leadership was in charge of the program at the center. On other days we had student visits at the center. As a result of these visits, students mobilized clothes and stationary for some of the supported children and remain excited about the work.

A number of Muslim students were uncomfortable with the gospel part of our program but agreed that something needs to be done for the poorer members of society. They are mobilizing support to pay school fees for some of



the children in our community.

Students who are more interested in sports have volunteered their time to work with local football groups providing training and plan to mobilize resources to buy these teams sports equipment and uniforms. (Football teams within the community are grouped by their zones. A young man Abdu Sekamanya, who dropped out of school in his S2, noted that there were many out-of-school-youth hanging around during the day. He mobilized them into teams as one way to keep them away from crime. He mobilizes them into football tournaments once a year. The teams aren't well trained though. Some of the University students therefore chose to work with this group of students). We have a sports day coming up and these students have taken over the responsibility of working with our own children to prepare for that day.

Two students (**Grace Nuwera, Joseph Kalanzi** - 4th year medical students) who volunteer at the Child program center every Saturday had this to say;

Why did you choose to volunteer at FOCUS?

We were looking for an opportunity to practice our Christian faith and FOCUS presented us with the perfect avenue to realize this dream of making a difference in the lives of people around us. The Child Project provides us with the chance to interact with children from some of the toughest conditions and actually make a positive contribution to their lives

What has been your experience?

It is been a wonderful experience at the very least.

We have made great friends in the staff at FOCUS. Every Saturday morning has been a short vacation, away from the monotony of school to the realities of life as seen through these children's lives.

We have had the opportunity to directly be involved in the children's life through the classes we teach. We teach: English, Life skills, Bible and Health Sciences. It's through these classes with the children that we interact and get to learn what it means to be in their positions. We discuss possible solutions to some of the issues. It's this opportunity to teach, that makes the whole experience very real. We draw our own work plans, execute them

ourselves and see them through. This creates a personal relationship with the children. The children range from kids in primary school to adults in university, and seeing them live together in one community, having fun and enjoying each others company is really breath-taking.

We have met a wide range of Christian people as they come to support the project. We learnt that the Americans, Norwegians and Israelites we met had a similar desire to help and be with these children like we do. We learnt about how they too are making a difference in the lives of people where they come from.

We have also learnt a lot about the dynamics of working in a Child Program. We have learnt how to deal with children, considering them as individuals as well as maintaining strict Christian principals.

It's the ability to know a child by name and know her story, where she comes from, what she likes or dislikes and how she goes by day by day, month by month that makes the FOCUS experience one to die for.

It's the joy in children's eyes as one of their own graduates from the project that shows what an impact the project has had on their lives.

Why would we encourage other students and working class people to volunteer at FOCUS and other such organizations?

Volunteering in such an organization gives a chance for students and working class people, to give to their community in terms of time and expertise. The students can learn firsthand how to deal with children and how projects are run through volunteering with the project activities. It is also an opportunity for students to practice their faith in a real life scenario through the children.

PARENT/CAREGIVER SECTION

When **Prossy Nalubowa**, now 50, started falling sick in 1997, members of her family and community in Kiboga, about 100km northwest of Kampala, accused her of contracting AIDS through promiscuity. She was admitted to a local hospital, where herpes zoster was diagnosed. The health workers at the hospital asked Prossy's relatives to pay to have her transferred to Mulago hospital in Kampala for better care. The family members refused. "They said that since I was about to die, they would rather buy a coffin for me," Prossy recalls. With the help of a community member, Prossy was transferred to Mulago hospital where she was admitted for 4 months and joined TASO (The AIDS Support Organization) day-care centre where she received counseling and psychosocial support.

The stigma however continued. After hospital, Prossy's late husband's family threw her out of the room where she was staying, in a suburb of Kampala. Her relatives in the village ransacked her property after she was assumed dead, and her 14 -year old daughter was married off to a 45-year old man to pay the bills for Prossy's other children.

In December 2001, Prossy was one of the 25 members of the TASO drama group who received free antiretroviral drugs with financial support from the Irish rock star, Bono. Her eldest son, who is HIV-positive, joined an antiretroviral drug trial run by Joint Clinical Research Center in Kampala. He also returned to school with financial help from TASO and is now at the university.



← Prossy (in a white T-Shirt) with some of the children she supports.

Prossy's health improved. Her CD4 cell count has risen from 101 to 484 and her weight has increased from 53kg to 80kg. She works in the community helping people live positively with HIV. She uses her experience to fight stigma and discrimination in society.

Over the years, Prossy has been taking on children living with HIV who are abandoned by their families who thought that they would die soon. She was referred to FOCUS for support by a community member who knew of her overwhelming challenge to care for 14 children. 3 are supported by SOS children's home where they are given free education and kept in boarding school during term time. 1 child is supported by Afri-care and is at University

(She is Prossy's daughter born with HIV (*she is given tuition money*)). She has four children who were abandoned when it was discovered they were living with HIV-FOCUS supports two of these. The others are her grand children whose parents passed away to the same disease. Prossy has a market stall where she sells food items.

"I struggle most with finding food and clothing for the children," She says. The family lives in a one room house but is very happy together. I suppose one key thing we need in life is knowing that we are loved and accepted the way we are. In spite of all the challenges, the children would not trade homes away from Prossy.

Nakintu Juliana

I make and sell samosas in Mulago area. Am able to do this because I was given money by FOCUS as capital to start up a business and I decided to make samosas because I was already supplying samosas for some one.

I asked and was given seventy thousand shillings for the start which I used. Unfortunately all the batch I made were rejected because the quality wasn't good and I made a great loss but I didn't give up. I borrowed some money from my brother and started again and this time they were great. A usual day for me starts at 3:00am and by 7:00am, I am through with frying and sending the samosas to the dealers or sellers.

Am able to make good money, my customers are increasing everyday as the samosas look better and neat which I attribute to hearing from my customers. My husband is very supportive because we wake up at the same time and work together until 7:00am. My son Denis (11 years) is learning how to make them too and he also knows the points of distribution.

Our home situation has greatly improved since I started working. We no longer have rent debts; the children are sure of food when they report back from school which wasn't the case when I was not working. The financial constrains on my husband have greatly reduced because we share the costs in running the home now and this has reduced a lot of quarrels which many times were a result of lack of money.

While I appreciate the food support that I would sometimes get, I think it was better giving me money to do something for myself. I was willing to work hard and I pray that this business will grow and maybe we will be able to support our family without project help. I pray that it happens. I will keep working hard.

Madina Mbekeka

I have 5 children, and no husband. He abandoned us and got another wife. He refuses to help out with the children. Three of my children including Musa who is supported by FOCUS are in school. I cannot afford to educate the other two. I sell roasted maize with my eldest daughter by the roadside and in Kalerwre market. The challenge of survival is worse when we are out of season for maize. We have been evicted from many houses for failure to pay rent and are constantly on the move. The changes in weather have made the last year or so complicated as we depend on seasonal crops. I can't afford many basics. I requested and was given forty thousand shillings. I go to villages and buy food cheaply and sell it in town. Everyone needs food so somehow we sell off the food. One thing that has changed is that we at least get a meal everyday.

Kemirembe Black Seda

I have two children living with HIV and I have the same disease. I used to sell water at someone's home and would be paid UGX 20,000 per month. However, my rent was also 20,000 per month. To supplement this, I used to sell a few tomatoes. The quality was very poor and many times we would eat them ourselves before they became spoiled. Late last year, the water tank was damaged and I could no longer make even that 20,000. We would go hungry for days. Someone recommended me to FOCUS for support and one of my sick sons was registered in the project. He is the only one whose tuition is guaranteed. Because I was still struggling to make ends meet, I was told there was an option for financial help. I asked and received UGX 30,000. I buy and sell fresh fruits and vegetables. I have no fridge or storage facility so I buy few items. I reinvest earnings and we spend on profits. The biggest change so far is having something to eat everyday!

CHILDREN'S SECTION

A nursery school teacher asked the children "Who would like to go to heaven?", and all the children said "yes" except Jonah. The teacher asked him why he did not say "yes". Jonah answered "[My mother told me to go home immediately after school so I won't have time.](#) *Joanita Nakawuki*

I have 100 birds on a tree; I throw a stone and kill one. How many remain? [None because the stone scared the rest away](#) *Enock Twinomugisha*

What kind of house has no doors and windows? [A Grave](#) *Barbara Nabukalu*

A policeman asking a math teacher-Lazio;

Policeman: I'm looking for a thief, did you see him?

Lazio: I think so.

Policeman: Could you please give a statement about what the man you saw looked like?

Lazio: His head had a scale of about 15cm and a nose quotient of about 2cm. His belly had a midpoint of 2.5 exactly, and the vector number of about $(\frac{2}{5})$ like my son Mark (*Mark Mukomeza*)

It happens once every first month of the year? What is it? ([All the children in Japan used to celebrate their birthdays on that day](#)) *Rosemary Nabasirye*

Imagine you are being chased by a lion. You run to climb a tree, but on the tree is a snake. You keep running and get to a river. But there's a crocodile. You now have nowhere to go. What do you do? ([Stop imagining!](#)) *Rosemary Nabasirye*

Two boys were born on the same day, time, minute, month, and second by the same Mother and Father and yet are not twins. How was that possible? ([They were not born in the same year](#)) *Rosemary N*

A man has grain, a wolf and a hen and he is standing near a river with a small boat. He has to cross the river but with only two things at a time. Remember that a wolf can eat a hen and a hen can eat grain! What should he do? *Rosemary N*

If I have three huts in a line and the middle one caught fire; when the fire engines come, which hut should they start with to stop the fire?

Why isn't a nose 12 inches long? [Because it's not a foot](#)

Why did the gum cross the road? [Because it was stuck on the chicken's leg](#)

Mary was born on 27th December. How come her birthday is in summer? [She is an Australian](#)

Teacher: Draw a cow eating grass

Student: I have finished drawing it.

Teacher: Where are the cow and the grass?

Student: The cow has eaten the grass which is now all finished and the cow went home

Teacher: Are you stupid?

Student: You told me to draw a moving cow. Isn't that more stupid? *Ibura Kawuma*

UPCOMING EVENTS/HOW TO GIVE

In the next month, we look forward to Class outings, training for teachers on how to teach children with learning disabilities, our annual sports day and the start of a new term.

Without your support, we would not be able to work with people like we do. We thank you so much for your partnership with us. Some of you have been especially involved in raising support for more children in the program. We want you to know that we appreciate you so much for your service to us. We request and encourage everyone who is supporting a child in the program to please send the annual support funds to any of the following addresses if you haven't already done so.

- A) (Our bank) Standard Chartered Bank Uganda Limited
5 Speke Road Branch,
P.O. Box 7111
Kampala. Telephone 256 0414 258117, Fax 256 041 342875, 231473
Swift address: SCBLUGKA
Account name; FOCUS Mulago Child Development Center Project
Account number: 0102010643100

Correspondent banks in New York and the UK for those who would prefer to use Standard Chartered bank transfers can use these addresses

Standard Chartered Bank
One Madison Avenue
New York 40010-3603
Swift Address: SCBLUS33

Standard Chartered Bank
37 Grace Church Street London
EC3V OBX
Swift address: SCBLGB2L

- B) Intersity Christian Fellowship (IVCF). Please clearly indicate on a check that funds are for FOCUS Mulago Child Development center program or FOCUS Uganda child project. The address is

P.O. Box 7896, Madison, WI 53707-7895
Tel: 608 274 9001
Account number: FOCUS UGANDA T2731 UK

- C) You can also send money directly to Uganda via Western Union and we will receive it almost immediately

Notes:

It costs US\$ 300 to support a child per year at the project, or UK£174, or UGSHS 500,000

Until next time

Audrey Karuhanga
Program Director