

ChildLine

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The newsletter of the Uganda AIDS Orphan Children Foundation

www.UAOCF.org

What Became of this Orphan?

We're excited to say we just received a new batch of letters from our children to share with their sponsors! The pandemic has meant it's more difficult to collect these letters, which is why we're so excited. We do mean we *just* received them though – no time to even look at them before this edition of ChildLine had to go to the printer. Which means we can't share a brand new story with you. Instead we were inspired to share what one of our children wrote a few years ago, and then tell you how she's doing now. We think her story will really move you!

Mackline K. joined the UAOCF program way back in 2005, when she was 9 years old. Her parents were poor peasants, and when her father died of AIDS, her mother was left to raise four children alone and in desperate straits. Her siblings were older; what was to become of little Mackline? She



Mackline when she was in secondary school

was smart, but there was barely money for food. There certainly was no money for a good school or anything more than basic survival.

That is to say, there was no money for that until Mackline joined UAOCF and was “adopted” by a loving sponsor. She worked hard and was consistently one of the top students in her class. In fact, she was able to go on beyond high school. She wrote to her sponsor in 2018 to thank them for their love and assistance and let them know she was at university studying Business Administration and Management! She finished that semester with a 3.89 GPA – outstanding! She told her sponsor

then, “Sometimes when I recall where I came from and where I am currently, I shed tears of joy and I am sure that *‘My tomorrow must be greater than today.’*” Your support and her hard work have made it so. We are delighted to tell you that in April, 2020, Mackline graduated! An orphan, the daughter of peasants. Thanks to the generosity of a person like you, now she has her university diploma and can help support her mother and raise up her entire community.

We can't forget that there are thousands of Macklines out there. Thousands of orphans whose world could completely change with the love and help of a sponsor like you. Especially in this time of crisis, they need you more than ever. Can you help another child's tomorrow be greater than today? Thank you for caring for these orphans!

“Every child you encounter is a divine appointment.”

-Wess Stafford

The Pandemic Rages on in Uganda

We sincerely wish COVID-19 was a thing of the past and we no longer had to give you updates on the pandemic and how our children are affected. As you already know, however, that's just not the case. To date, Uganda has seen about 100,000 diagnosed cases of COVID, and close to 3,000 deaths. We are very thankful and relieved to say that no cases have been identified among any of the children UAOCF supports. But as the pandemic progresses, the children continue to be affected in other important ways.

In our last edition of ChildLine, we told you about the Ugandan government's plans to reopen schools. Cases were very low in Uganda then; they were close to zero all the way through April. And schools began to reopen,

grade by grade. Most grades had returned to school by May, when the number of cases started to tick up – and then exploded in June. That resurgence, and the Delta variant, prompted the government to enact a new round of restrictions. On June 7th, schools were closed once again. What did this mean for our children?

Most of our children returned to school for at least a short time while they were open. About fifty were due to finish their level of school and take national exams; our Kabale-based Intervention Committee visited all of them to make sure they could be as prepared as possible. We are waiting to hear their results. Among our students in university and vocational programs, 23 were able to complete their courses and graduate. Overall, though, the pandemic took a real toll on the children's school performance. And it's not just our children, of course. The UNICEF representative in Uganda, Dr. Munir Safieldin, reported that Uganda was included among the

20 countries with the most days of full school closures. And an international study of developing countries like Uganda found that pandemic-related school closures put students up to six months behind where they would otherwise be! There are also other studies suggesting that children who are out of school for extended periods of time due to closures are at much higher risk of never completing their education. And the damage the pandemic has done is not just to education. UNICEF also reported a surge in hunger: because they were not being fed at school, 20% of Ugandan children were receiving less than a meal a day on average.

Obviously, we didn't need to wait for a UNICEF report to know we had to keep in touch with our children and make sure they had all their basic needs met; we've been doing that since the very first school closures over a year ago.

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COVID-19 in Uganda (continued)

What have we learned? Some of our children were living in substandard structures that were at risk of collapse. In these cases, we work with those families and communities to build new houses, and ensure that those houses could never be taken from a vulnerable orphan. (Take a look at the pictures!) We continue to monitor the health and safety of all our children, including making sure they have enough food. With our Intervention Committee, we're planning the best path forward once restrictions are eased and the children can go back to school.



On the left, Jonan I. proudly shows off the home being constructed for him. On the right, little James G.'s house is ready.

So what do we know about when that will be? While the government began lifting some COVID-related restrictions in late July, schools remain closed. The government has said they may reopen once health workers, teachers, and other essential workers have been vaccinated – but with vaccine scarce in the country, it

remains to be seen when that will be. At the end of July, Uganda received over 1.7 million vaccine doses, but no plan has been announced for how they will be distributed or to whom. In the meantime, you can rest assured knowing that our children are safe and well cared for.



P.O. Box 64485
Los Angeles, CA 90064

Never Enough Ways to Say Thank You

It would be easy for people just to focus on themselves and their own needs these days. Who could blame them with the situation we're all living through? But UAOCF's donors have always had bigger hearts. We're currently supporting 467 children. That's 4 more than we reported in the last edition of ChildLine! In spite of it all – or maybe because of it? – you keep giving, you make sure that these children are safe and have hope for a better future. Our children thank you. And with our deepest gratitude, so do we.

Bigger Picture: Children in Uganda

Uganda is a developing country, and this is evident in the experiences of children across the country. A UNICEF report identified a pattern of “vulnerability, poverty and ill-being” that puts Ugandan children's development, education, and even survival at risk. Malnutrition is high, and one-third of children don't have good access to sanitation or clean water. Almost three-quarters of households don't even have soap and water for children to wash their hands. Public schools are poor, and have high dropout rates. Almost half of all children are classified as

“moderately vulnerable.”

That context makes the reality of the orphans that UAOCF serves even starker than it might have seemed. It's why we make sure that we provide such basics as soap along with the food we deliver to our children and families. It's why putting them in good schools is so critical. Never doubt that when you support UAOCF, you are helping the neediest of the needy!

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 use your credit card to donate via our website: www.UAOCF.org.