

## CHILDREN OF BUDUDA NEWSLETTER – WINTER 2019-20

### A Bududa Christmas for our Children

by Nanzala Martha, Social Worker

Christmas is a special time and many people especially children look forward eagerly to this day. as we Children of Bududa staff arrange a special family-like celebration for them.

On the last Saturday before Christmas, the program arranges activities such assembly, games and counselling, All the children receive a small gift of soap and Vaseline for their skin.

The party normally starts at 9:00 AM. At the opening assembly, we thank them for working hard at school and encourage them to be disciplined at all times. Then we leave them to socialize by playing soccer, skipping rope, sharing events at their respective schools and listening to music. We also show a movie.



The kitchen team members do their best to prepare a feast. The children eat rice and meat. Most families in Bududa only eat meat at Christmas so this is a rare treat. They don't normally eat rice either as this is expensive "muzungu" (white person's) food. We staff are always delighted to see how the children relish their special meal, sitting all together as one family.

As they depart to their respective homes, we hand out the gifts, wish them a very merry Christmas and remind them to be sure to come back to Saturday School in the new year. Feedback from parents/guardians indicates that the children are really impressed with the party and the gifts.

This celebration would be impossible without the support and kindness of you sponsors. We love you wherever you are and you will forever remain special to us. You mean a lot to us as a community.

We wish you all a happy new year and look forward to the pleasure of meeting you one day.

Peace be with you all.

## 2019 Overview of the Children of Bududa Program – October 2019

By Sheila Havard

As international coordinator of the Children of Bududa program, I am concerned to keep tabs on how the program is progressing. Many of the children who started with us in 2005 are still with us, now teenagers and barely recognizable when you look at their original photos as small children. It is so gratifying to see these youngsters grow up into independent-minded young people, each with their own dreams and ambitions.

Although teenagers form the bulk of our children, we are now recruiting younger kids. In fact we recently recruited two young girls and we are actively recruiting up to four or five more right now.

*Tailoring is one of the career-oriented courses available to the Children of Bududa at the Bududa Vocational Academy – photo credit Sheila Havard*



We are particularly lucky in our caring staff. Without being able to constantly liaise with Martha, Grace and Justine in Bududa, my task as international coordinator would be impossible. Nanzala Martha, our social worker, has a university degree in social work and a loving heart. Namyeka Grace, COB Director, has the responsibility of supervising the whole team of Saturday School teachers and keeps close contact with the children, especially those on her own hill, Bushiribo. Kalenda Justine, in addition to her role as guesthouse manger, stepped into the breach during Martha's recent maternity leave and continued to work for the program until the end of 2019.



When I calculated the program statistics the other day, I came up with the following:

- total children in the program: 72
- in primary school in Bududa: 24
- in primary school boarding outside Bududa (Mbale): 1
- in secondary school in Bududa: 17
- in secondary day school outside Bududa (Islamic day school, living with relative in Mbale): 1
- in secondary boarding schools in Bududa and elsewhere: 14
- studying nursing: 3
- Bududa Vocational Academy: 3
- vocational schools outside Bududa (veterinary medicine, concrete laying and brick making): 7
- Bududa Vocational Academy, sponsored but not in Children of Bududa program: 2

It is evident from the above that chosen career paths are as individual as the youngsters themselves.

We try to enable all the children to fulfill their potential. The Saturday program, which is attended by all those living in Bududa all year long and by those studying outside Bududa during the holidays, provides a varied range of courses from literacy and life skills to practical hands-on skills like basket making and tailoring. We hope to start agricultural training again if we can hire a teacher as practically the whole village population is engaged in some kind of farming. This varied teaching program ensures that those who are unable to progress far in the regular school system at least have an income generating skill to fall back on.

One shift in focus is to concentrate more on encouraging our youngsters to train at the Bududa Vocational Academy. As in the West, unfortunately, academic education is of high status value and even those less gifted academically resist switching from the regular school system to vocational training. We fear

this is a mistake as unemployment amongst school leavers is sky-high whereas those with a manual skill stand a much better chance of being able to fend for themselves and earn at least a meagre living.

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These colourful baskets (see photo on left) for instance sell well locally and hopefully contribute to reducing the use of the omnipresent plastic bag. There is also a market for them in North America although transporting them back there is a problem. Harriet took lessons from a skilled teacher we brought in from West Nile in the far northwestern corner of Uganda. She immediately took to the skill and set up her own small business selling baskets.



*Computer students at work at the Children of Bududa Saturday School program  
Kutosi Isaac (foreground) is one of the youngsters who has been with  
us the longest – photo credit Kalenda Justine*

## **Major Program Changes for 2020**

### **Notification to Sponsors**

In 2019 a new fee structure comes into effect. The charge for one year's sponsorship will henceforth be \$350.00. It is no longer feasible for the Bududa Learning Center to shoulder the deficit of the Children of Bududa program. It has to be self-sustaining. The last increase was quite some years ago and, in the meantime, Uganda's inflation rate has substantially increased the cost of all our inputs: teachers' salaries – due to increase again this year – maize meal for the Saturday School meals, school supplies, etc. We take this step with regret but it is unavoidable.

A further change affects children hitherto seconded to outside schools – secondary and primary boarding schools, local and more distant vocational institutions, etc. Students already studying out of Bududa will be supported to finish their courses but there will be no outside secondment after this. Picking and choosing students for privileged treatment is unfair to and resented by the less fortunate ones who are left behind in inferior schools, and it also imposes a burden on the selected children's sponsors that is frankly asking too much of them. We are immensely proud of our outside graduates but the program was not sustainable. Our plan henceforth is to encourage children in the program to reach "O" (Ordinary) level standard and take the government exams when they are 16 or a little older and then encourage them to get vocational training in our Bududa Vocational Academy, where they can work towards national certification in their chosen trade (see article on page 1).

## Sad Passing of Bududda Learning Center Boda Boda Driver Wopo Robert by Sheila Havard

I must pass on to you with great sorrow the death of the school's faithful boda boda (motorcycle) driver Wopo Robert in October. He was the safest of all motorcycle drivers, able to navigate the



deepest mud in the rainy season. He knew exactly when to walk his bike through the slushy mess, when to ask his passengers to alight and when it was safe to proceed. He once saved my life when an oncoming lorry on our side (forced him into the ditch. Through his skill, the bike remained upright.

Robert was always good-natured and had endless patience when social worker Nanzala Martha and I kept him waiting while we finished up tasks in the office.

Robert died of untreated ulcers. Have you ever heard of anyone dying of ulcers in the West? Everyone here I mention this to raises their eyebrows. This is what happens when you are poor and there is no such thing as health insurance. You put off getting treated until it is too late. (Incidentally, this is also why so many more mothers here die in childbirth than do in the West.) Kotaki Robert, the Bududa Learning Center chief operating officer, financed medical care and our social

worker was with him to the end to support the family

Robert leaves in mourning two wives and numerous children. We plan to take two of the younger ones into the program to ease the burden somewhat.



*Nasila Aida and some of her children. The oldest boy has moved to Kenya to earn money to help the family. Aida works a smallholding and owns a pig.*

## Talking of the Unmentionable - Latrines Come in all Shapes and Sizes by Sheila Havard

In my 15 years of annual visits to our Bududa project, local “washroom facilities” have become somewhat of an obsession with me. Normally an unmentionable subject or one taken for granted at home, the private latrine or outhouse is critical to the health of our 72 sponsored children and young people.



***Banana-leaf latrine with decaying floor boards***

Latrines take on different forms (see photos). Very rarely, they can be strong brick and cement structures. This normally only occurs if a sponsor is willing to provide the construction funds as Bududans cannot afford the \$200 or so outlay required. The usual latrine though is very different, normally a flimsy structure built of wattle (mud and branches) and with a banana-leaf or corrugated iron roof.

Despite the vital role they play in family hygiene, latrines are not a priority and frequently get neglected. When I visit our Children of Bududa program families with a local staff member to check up on their home environment, the latrine is always one of the points on our checklist. Some

of the horrors I have witnessed include the very frequent latrine with a full or nearly full hole, latrines with rotting boards around the hole or with such a gaping hole that a small child could fall in, latrine buildings rotting away at the base and tilting precariously to one side and latrines exposed to the elements – no curtain over the doorway, gaping hole in walls or roof etc. Sometimes a family will share a latrine with neighbours or a school, in which case nobody may take responsibility for keeping it clean. And worst of all, some indigent or dysfunctional families I have visited have no access to a latrine whatsoever

Of course we recommend improvements to families with poor latrines, but know full well it will be a struggle for them to gather together the financial resources required. The program funds are needed for Saturday School and to provide our children with scholastic requirements and does not stretch to individual family construction costs.

Where we can help is in providing hygiene advice but this is mammoth task and one that requires the patience of an angel. We customarily recommend hanging a small jerrican of water on a nail outside the latrine for hand-washing purposes. On a few occasions we find a jerrican still hanging there on our next visit about a year later. It is hard to change the customs of an illiterate population, especially when the connection between hygiene and disease is not common knowledge. The program organizes parents’ meetings and hygiene issues can be discussed at such times but not all parents can be persuaded to attend.



***Social worker Martha, jerrican in hand, posing in front of a newly finished and mudded latrine***

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If you are interested in sponsoring a latrine for your sponsor child or for a family to be selected by the program, please contact [havard\\_translations@hotmail.com](mailto:havard_translations@hotmail.com).

***Brand new brick latrine and proud owner***



***The commonest form of motorized travel for short to medium distances is by motorbike. Although Samuel is not a boda boda driver, the photo gives an idea of this cramped and uncomfortable form of transportation. Boda boda drivers spend long hours bumping up and down the dirt tracks, often in a cloud of dust or a sea of mud for fares the equivalent of \$0.30 to \$0.60. Photo credit Ato Esther***