

Advantage Africa and the Guernsey Overseas Aid Commission

Income Generation and Improved Health for Single Parent Families in Uganda

Final Report - June 2013

Advantage Africa's October 2012 Progress Report, compiled with our partner the Single Parents' Association of Uganda (SPAU), detailed successful training and commencement of income-generating activities for two groups of single parents in Bulange, Kampala District and Gobero, Wakiso District. Subsequent progress with these initiatives has been steady and encouraging. Complementary work in malaria prevention and HIV support through memory work and provision of health and hygiene kits have also taken place for both groups. Together, these activities have brought lasting improvements in the lives of 1,875 vulnerable people.

Bulange Single Parents' Group

Income-generating activities—Candle-making

The women are well organised, take great pride in their product, painstakingly cleaning the moulds between each production of 52 candles so that no wax is wasted. To ensure increased production and more effective use of space, the group has split into two sections, Bulange A and Bulange B, with 25 women in each. The 50 women meet in neighbouring locations every Tuesday and Saturday to produce their candles and have split up tasks according to preference and skills with some inserting wicks, some responsible for melting and keeping the wax pure, some assembling and filling the packaging and some responsible for marketing. As the women gather together to conscientiously fulfil their allotted tasks, there is a deep sense of companionship and mutual support.



Maryam sieves the wax to ensure its purity



Nobuat leads the group in singing and dancing

Nobuat, a single parent of five children aged between four and eleven, is HIV positive. In early 2012, before SPAU brought her into the Bulange Single Parents' Group, she was close to death with a very low CD4 count. SPAU helped her to receive counselling and treatment and she now advises other people about living positively with HIV. Nobuat told Advantage Africa's Programme Manager how much she enjoyed making candles with the other women and that now, instead of feeling alone, she feels hopeful and happy. Nobuat loves leading the Bulange group in joyful songs and dances saying 'I don't want to see any sad faces!'

The group's Treasurer, Winifred, says that while greater emphasis needs to put on widening the market for the candles, demand is steady and people always come back for their candles when they've tried them once. There are cheaper, mass-produced alternatives available locally, but they burn twice as quickly and don't have the mosquito-repellent attributes of the Bulange candles.



The Bulange Group's candle on the left burns more slowly and doesn't drip

An experiment with a Bulange candle alongside a cheaper version demonstrates the clear superiority of the single parent group's product.

A single candle is sold for 400/- (10 pence) and a box of eight for 3200/- (80 pence). Group members have been selling the candles to individuals as well as to local supermarkets and restaurants. The reputation of the candles has even spread as far as Juba, Southern Sudan from where the group recently received an order for 100 boxes! As their expertise has increased, single parents have also been raising an income through providing candle-making training to other small groups, charging a fee of 30,000/- (£7.50) per course. All profits are put back into candle production materials or the group's savings account from where the Treasurer periodically makes equal payments to all members. Meeting the basic needs of their families is still a challenge for the single parents, each caring for an average of six children, and most supplement this income through frying pancakes, cooking maize and washing clothes. However, there is a distinct sense that the situation is improving as production and marketing of the candles increases.

With the success of the candle-making enterprise, since May 2013 the activity has been extended to include 25 further single parents from the nearby Lungujja widow's group. The Lungujja group leader, Mary, took part in the Bulange group's training and has closely followed their activities over the past year. The Lungujja group has been supported with moulds, wax and training and members themselves are providing wicks, oil and perfumes. Mary and her fellow single parents in the Lungujja group are delighted that they can learn together and benefit from this income-generating opportunity.

Improved Health—Malaria Prevention

Malaria prevention training took place in January 2013 and the 50 single parents' group members and 50 further vulnerable households in the Bulange slums received three durable, treated mosquito nets each. This quantity is enough to ensure every member of the household is protected as smaller children generally share their nets. The insecticide lasts for five years before re-treatment is necessary.

As well as protecting the sleeping people within, the insecticide on the nets helps to reduce the overall numbers of mosquitoes in the home and surrounding area.



Bulange slums where most of the single parents live

Alongside learning how to fix and use their nets effectively, the training also helped the participants to understand how to reduce malaria in their local environment by getting rid of piles of rubbish and pools of standing water, both of which attract mosquitoes. This is a major challenge in a slum environment and Advantage Africa's partner SPAU reports that there are still considerable numbers of stagnant pools to contend with. SPAU will continue to support the community in ensuring improvements to the local area are maintained.

Improved Health—Memory Work Training

In January 2013, the Bulange Single Parents' Group members took part in a week of memory work training to help them cope with the practical and psychological effects of HIV as well as with the day-to-day struggles of caring for their families alone. All group members were resoundingly positive about the experience:



Juliet with her young daughter Praise

Jennifer says 'I thought I would just die and leave the children anyhow. Now I have a plan for their future.'

Asia says that memory work helps her '...to discuss issues with my kids. I couldn't do that before!'

Juliet, whose husband left her when she was pregnant says memory work and the friendship of the other group members has 'given me courage to stand on my own two feet.'

Bulange B leader Constance told Advantage Africa's Programme Manager that single parents live in a state of constant tension trying to support, feed and educate their family, and that their exhaustion and anxiety could sometimes make them 'harsh with their children.' Women who had been abandoned by their husbands would sometimes 'shift their aggressiveness for the man to their children.' They all felt that the memory work training, along with the whole experience of being part of the Bulange Single Parents' Group, had reduced their stress and made them better parents.

Challenges and the Future

Income from the candles is increasing as news about their quality spreads, but the group recognises the need to put significantly more emphasis on widening their market. Splitting into two sections has helped the members use their materials and limited space more effectively and their expertise and level of production is steadily increasing.

On a recent monitoring visit to the Bulange Single Parents' Group, Advantage Africa's partner SPAU reports that a small handful of families have been setting aside some of their mosquito nets 'for visitors.' It is not uncommon for families living in extreme poverty to treasure such objects and keep them pristine and unused for 'special occasions.' This is why careful monitoring and follow-up is crucial after any distribution of mosquito nets. SPAU is working hard to remind these families of their training and the importance of protection for all household members every night from a treated net.

As a result of the support from the Guernsey Overseas Aid Commission, all seventy-five members of the Bulange and Lungujja Single Parents' Group, previously living isolated and despairing lives, are now equipped to meet the needs of their families and face the future with confidence.

To loud applause from all members, Bulange A group leader Jaja Jane expressed heartfelt gratitude to all involved with the Guernsey Overseas Aid Commission for their support, saying 'Giving is a blessing and you have given with one heart!'



Bulange A group leader Jaja Jane with two of her orphaned grandchildren

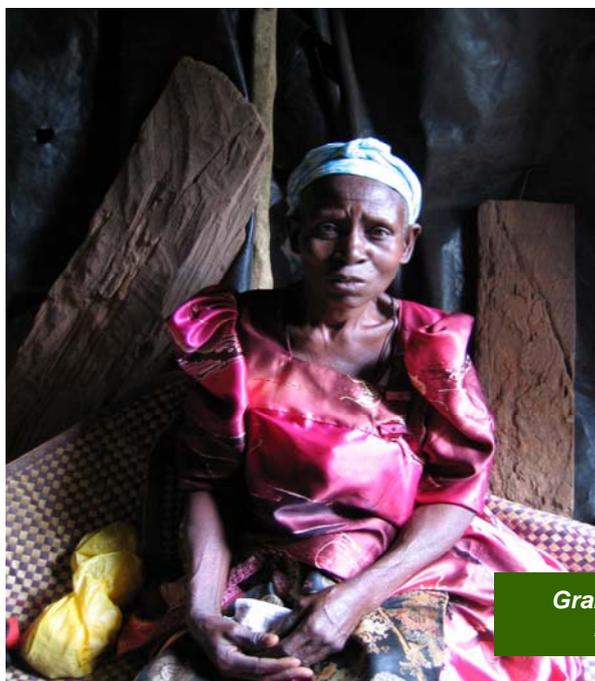
Gobero Single Parents' Group Income-generating Activities—Poultry Rearing

Each of the 50 single parents received 60 day-old chicks in June 2012 along with intensive training, resources and support in their effective care. At the time of Jane Betts' visit in early February 2013, the majority of the group still had more than fifty healthy, full grown hens producing significant quantities of eggs. The single parents sell a tray of thirty eggs for 7,000/- (£1.75) in local markets and to chapatti makers and they have been complimented on the eggs' flavourful taste. Some of the income from their eggs is put back into buying chicken feed, but it also helps the parents' to meet their daily basic needs. Namutebi said *'There is a great change—we can get an income to buy domestic things.'* A proportion of the eggs are also used to boost their own families' nutrition.

Alex, aged 27, is a widower with two children aged 2 and 4. He had never raised poultry before the Gobero Single Parents' Group's training took place in June 2012, but he soon became very accomplished and generously shares his experiences and skills with the other group members. Amongst his initial 60 chicks were a handful of cockerels, some of which he eventually sold for 20,000/- each (£5). His hens have grown to be very healthy and productive and he is now in a position to increase his enterprise by buying a further 200 chicks.



Alex with his chickens



Aged 75, Anna is one of the oldest members of the single parents' group. Since the death of her own children she has been caring for her five grandchildren. While clearly tired and in poor health, she is very proud of her growing supply of eggs and says 'they have helped the children when they are sick.'

**Grandmother Anna
in her home**

According to group leader Aisha Nassunna, only three people in the group have struggled to rear their poultry and produce good quantities of eggs, and they are being supported and encouraged by the other members. 'Aisha said *'Now we all know each other and our most successful farmers are sharing their good practices.'*

Improved Health—Malaria Prevention

Immediately following two days of malaria prevention training at the end of October 2012, 300 treated mosquito nets were distributed to the 50 single parent families and 50 further vulnerable families in the Gobero community.

Kate, widowed in 2010, cares for seven children. She took Jane Betts into her home to see her safely-fixed mosquito nets and said with a huge smile, 'Since we had them there has been no more terrible fever in our home.' This is a recurrent theme with all the beneficiaries, each keen to tell Advantage Africa's Programme Manager that neither they nor their children have suffered from malaria since they received the treated nets.



'There has been no more terrible fever in our home!' says widow Kate



Joachim is a widower caring for three children. Struggling with fragile health himself, Joachim says that before becoming involved with the Gobero single parents' group, his family '...were living a miserable life. Noelline [his 12 year old daughter] used to be sick all the time. Since the mosquito nets we have spent good time without malaria.'

Joachim with two of his children, Noelline and Charles

Improved Health—Memory Work Training

All the Gobero Single Parents' Group members took part in a week of training in Memory Work in November 2012. Responses to the training from group members included:

'The training was wonderful. It has helped us to handle our children.'

'Memory work has affected not only our families but the whole community. Ever since we got the training we have assisted others who weren't there.'

'Memory work has showed me how to plan for my children. I am putting things in writing so that they will inherit.'

'I have no way of expressing my happiness. Memory work has done a very good job and I have learnt to plan for the future.'

'This training was essential! I have started writing a will and my children have learn about their roots. I wish I had known about it years ago!'

Challenges and the future

While selling eggs and some livestock have helped the single parents to meet their basic needs, they have still needed to supplement their income by selling cassava, sweet potato and coffee. However, in the words of Namutebi, *'Things are better than before and all the children are in school!'*

SPAU focused on the most vulnerable families to bring into the Single Parents' Group, but the members were aware and concerned for many other families in the community living in very difficult circumstances. The whole group was so positive about their experience of Memory Work that Aisha requested SPAU and Advantage Africa to support Memory Work Training of Trainers (TOT) so they could ensure the whole of the wider community could benefit.



SPAU Director Paul Lwanga with Gobero Single Parents' Group member Josephine

Josephine, a widow with five children, expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to raise poultry and be part of the group. 'I can pay school fees and I have gained knowledge. SPAU have worked with us in a proper way. We are out of poverty!'

Health and Hygiene Kits

In May 2013, health kits were distributed to 50 orphaned and vulnerable children in Gobero and Bulange. Each health kit included a mattress, bed sheet, blanket, toothpaste and toothbrush. Sleeping off the floor means that the children can avoid debilitating parasitic skin infections and improved rest will have a positive impact on their overall health.



Ruth, aged ten, was orphaned when both her parents died from AIDS-related illness in 2010. She is now cared for by her grandmother who herself is too frail to work. Life continues to be very hard for Ruth, but SPAU Director Paul says 'When we delivered her mattress, blanket, toothpaste and brush, she was the happiest girl!'

Ruth with her grandmother



Florence is a nine year old orphan living in Gobero. She lives with her sister who also has three young children of her own. Florence's sister is a single parent and struggles to provide for the four children in her care. The health and hygiene kit was received with great joy and appreciation.

Florence (in blue with her sister and young nephew) is delighted with her mattress

Expenditure Report

Activity	Budget £	Restricted Funds (Guernsey Overseas Aid Commission)	Unrestricted Funds (Advantage Africa)	Total Funds	Note
Poultry-rearing	6,553	5,298	0	5,298	1
Candle-making	5,546	5,433	0	5,433	2
Malaria prevention and basic health	7,144	7,543	559	8,102	3
HIV & AIDS	1,905	2,705	800	3,505	4
Uganda implementation & monitoring	1,800	2,075	500	2,575	5
Project administration	300	194	0	194	6
Grand Total	23,248	23,248	1,859	25,107	7

1. Savings were made on poultry feed costs once the single parents were earning a sufficient income from egg production to contribute to the upkeep of their livestock.
2. Considerable savings were made on wax purchases by avoiding the use of expensive beeswax, without compromise to candle quality. With the success of the candle-making initiative, the single parents in Bulange were able to start buying their own materials and the activities were then extended to include a further 25 single parents. 75 single parents, caring for an average of six of their own children and adopted orphans each, have learnt to produce and market quality candles.
3. The cost of high-quality treated malaria nets and fixings continues to rise in Uganda.
4. The memory work activities were hugely appreciated by all beneficiaries in Gobero and Bulange and so resulted in higher than expected turnout and therefore expenditure on training, subsistence and resources for attendees. The cost of venue hire also proved more expensive than anticipated. There was universal attendance by members of the single parents' groups at the training and its impact resulted in great enthusiasm to extend the opportunity within their communities.
5. The continued success of this project is due in no small part to the diligence of SPAU in supporting and following up the single parents' groups' activities. Steep increases in fuel and vehicle maintenance costs account for the variance on this budget line.
6. Project administration costs were monitored closely and kept to a minimum.
7. The additional £1,859 spent on this project was provided from Advantage Africa's unrestricted funds. This was allocated to unexpected costs such as the DVD player for the memory work training and the increased cost of malaria nets, memory work materials and vehicle fuel outlined above.

Thank you to the Guernsey Overseas Aid Commission

The transformation in the well-being and outlook of the single parent families in Bulange and Gobero since the income-generating training began in June 2012 is stark and astonishing. Without exception, the parents say that life is now better. They have learned valuable skills and can earn an income, keep safe from malaria and ensure their children's rights to property and possessions will be safeguarded in the event of their death. They have new confidence, improved mental and physical health and firm

friendships to uphold them. In the words of Joachim from Gobero *'Now the future is bright and I have lots of friends!'*

The reach and impact of this project has surpassed expectations. With the extension of candle-making to beneficiaries in Lungujja and mosquito net distribution to a 100 additional vulnerable households, direct beneficiaries of the Guernsey Overseas Aid Commission's support number over 1,375. At least 500 further community members have derived benefits indirectly through shared memory work learning and malaria reduction. Single parents and their children in Bulange and Gobero, the staff of SPAU and Advantage Africa all extend our sincerest thanks to the Guernsey Overseas Aid Commission for supporting this life-changing project.



Things are better than before! Some of the Gobero single parents' children and adopted orphans