

Suubi Teen MOPS Uganda - Newsletter August 2019

Covid-19 in Uganda

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused much trouble in Uganda. Cases are only now beginning to rise. But the country has been crippled by Covid-19 since March: People were asked to stay home for a 4-month-lockdown, yet they were not given the resources to do so. This left thousands of people unemployed, which meant that they couldn't afford to buy food or pay rent. Even though the strict lockdown is currently lifted, it has left thousands of people destitute. One survey says that as many as 60% of the children and 70% of the women in the slums of Kampala were sexually exploited for food in the past 5 months. Many are homeless because they cannot pay their rent. Thousands of girls are now pregnant. Child marriage is common. Schools closed on March 18th. And it looks like schools will not open again until 2021 (official statement: they won't reopen until there is a vaccination). Even now, over 5000 private schools are bankrupt, possibly many more will follow.

Our Kids are in (Home)school!

We have 31 kids receiving a school sponsorship. Since schools are closed, we now are paying for private tutoring at home. This is good news for several reasons: our kids can keep learning, and we can also employ 10 schoolteachers who would otherwise be out of work. We plan to continue this tutoring arrangement for the 3rd term. To those of you who are sponsoring a child: Thank you! Check your emails in the next few days for a more detailed update on your sponsor child.



Walk by faith, work while you “wait”

We have had to pay for food and rent for 35 women and 46 children since March. I honestly do not know how we are managing this. But people are giving. And the money seems to come just as we need it.

Some of the women used to earn money by washing clothes for international students or selling soda or grilled corn on the streets. But the university is closed, and street



vending is forbidden. So, these women lost their jobs. We will support them for an unknown time. But we also believe in the dignity of work, so we are trying to provide opportunities for them to earn their food and rent. Ten of the women make baskets. We have sold 40 baskets so far and have 20 more that need to be sold. The cost for a basket is 35 Euro/39 USD and a 15-euro delivery fee. We have sent 32 baskets to the US and hope to send the rest of them to Germany soon.

Some other women are sewing 2000 washable sanitary pads to give to schoolgirls. And they are making 800 washable facemasks to hand out to senior citizens in the slums. The face masks and pads are given in kits along with handmade soap. The soap is made by a third group of women in our workshops. So far, this year, we have given away over 4000 bars of soap, nearly 6000 washable pads, and over 600 facemasks to the poor. We will, God willing, make thousands more soaps and masks over the next few months. We wish we had official grants to do this work. But we see the need in the community and have decided to help where we can. Even if it's a step of faith. Thousands of people in the slums cannot afford even a bar of soap, let alone disinfectant or other means of protection against



Covid-19. These people fear the worst, some even claim they are waiting to die. But when they receive a bar of soap and a few facemasks, they sense a glimpse of hope. We love the work our women do. They can't continue without the funding. But if we receive the support, the women will continue to not only work for their own living, but to bless the people who need it.

Bare necessities: food, bed nets, and stoves



We were able to provide the group with new bed nets to prevent malaria. We purchased 80 new nets last week. We also gave our women a high efficiency cooking stove. These stoves burn cleaner and use less fuel. It will save them money and is good for the environment.

Suubi also provides food for its group members. Currently, the diet is not particularly varied: Mostly rice and beans, some green vegetables, and eggs. One of our women has suffered serious medical problems due to a poor diet. And others

are starting to suffer. We need to send money for supplements like milk, fruit, and vitamins. But we do not have the funds. Food is an urgent need for many people. We are grateful that our people aren't starving, yet we pray that we could buy better supplies.

We did a fundraiser to give food to 30 families in the village where we built a well. The food lasted these families for almost a month. If we had unlimited resources, we would help these families more. But they are no longer locked down. And we cannot afford additional support.

How a young mom heals from violence

Last December, the youngest mom in our group was attacked and raped. She is only 17 years old. In July she gave birth to her 3rd son. The baby was born healthy, but at first, the mother rejected him. She was afraid and traumatized. How would she care for 3 boys when she lived in a slum and didn't even have enough food or clothes for them? But then she felt the support of the community at Suubi. Her food and rent were paid for the summer. Some women take turns watching her kids so she can rest. Some women help clean her house, others bring meals or keep her company. And a local missionary donated clothes and diapers. She still faces the world as a 17-year-old in a slum. She still faces the challenge of raising three boys. But she now realizes that she is not alone. So, she now accepts her son just like the other two. Praise God! Eventually we will find a child sponsor for this boy. God willing, he will receive an education. And his mother, like all our women will continue to be empowered. We do not want her or any of our women to carry the word victim around like a heavy weight. They are all survivors who can change their nation. We need your continued support both in prayers and finances. But we want you to know we try to faithfully use your support to move mountains.

Plans for the future: Starting another sewing school



On September 15th, we want to start a 6 to 8 month sewing school. We want to train the 10 women who now make baskets. The largest part of their school costs is just providing living expenses as they learn. We already are forced to provide living expenses, so we might as well professionally train them. This is a step of faith. We do not have the funds, but we feel it is the right thing to do. We will start and continue if we can. It will cost 60 Euros a month for 8 months to educate one woman.

Dolls for joy



Finally, there is a sign of hope from the already trained sewing workshop: The women have begun to sew dolls. They are naming them “Amani” dolls, which is Swahili for “peace”. Here’s what we plan to do: Each doll is made to look like a woman in the group. When they are sold, they will each come with a photo and a short profile of the women they represent. It is our hope that people will feel a connection to and pray for our moms. And the money from the sale of these dolls will pay for Christmas money for our Suubi families. It has been an exceedingly difficult year. But we are going to end 2020 well. The women in the group have never actually owned dolls. So, we will have a doll made for every single woman in the group. Sylvia thought at first that it would be strange for grown women to own a doll. But she admitted she would like to have one, too. I think this project brings them a great amount of joy. And joy is a powerful healer! If we can find a market to buy our Amani dolls, it would be a dream for our women to open a doll making business. And in the meantime, the dolls give the families joy in the middle of everything.