

Changing girls' futures in Kwale District

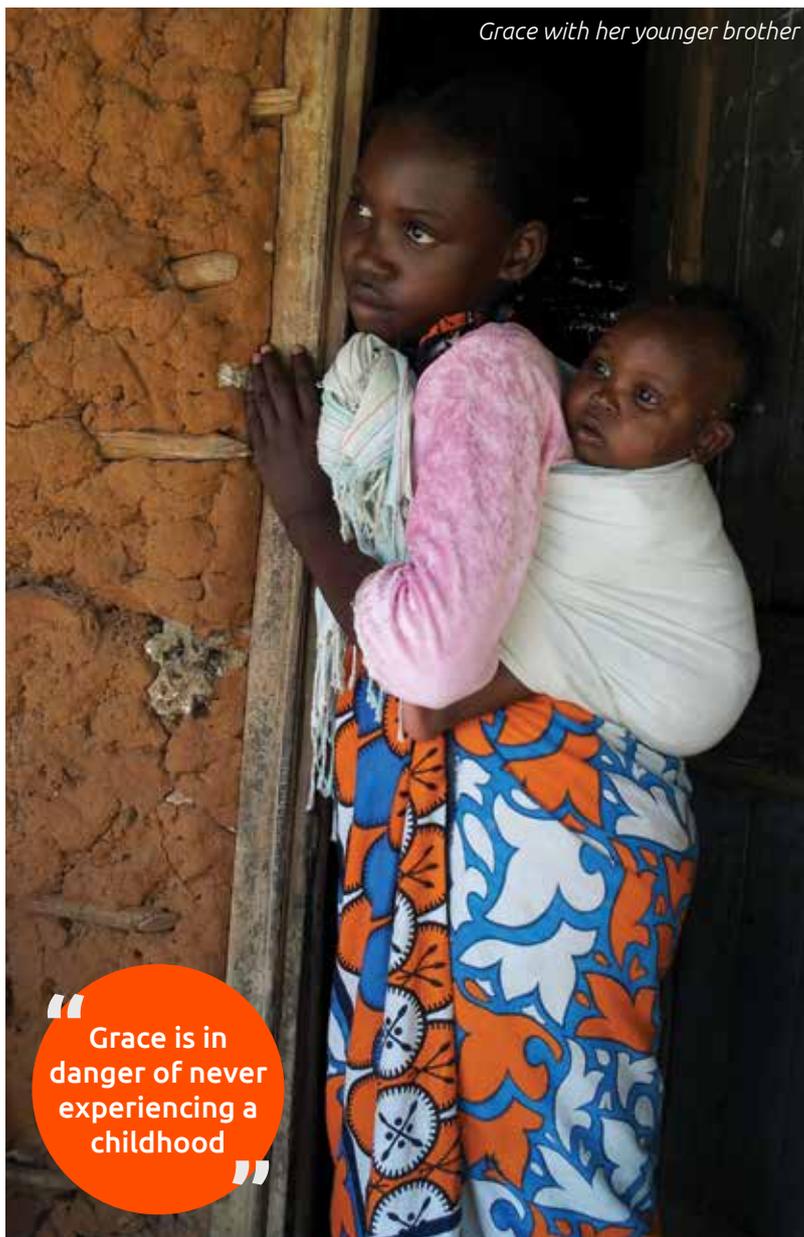
Meet Grace. Grace is a ten year old who lives with her grandmother and her four siblings. Her mother died from an HIV-related illness as a result of sex work, the only way that she could earn an income for her children. Grace has never been to primary school, she can't read or write and she spends her day caring for her younger brothers, doing housework or cultivating her family's small garden to try to grow food. Like many of the girls we spoke to in Kwale, Grace wants to learn, she wants to play with her friends and she wants to aspire to more than marriage and motherhood. But Grace's grandmother, like many of the other parents and community members, doesn't see the value in educating a girl, because a girl's value is limited to her role as a wife and mother.

Grace is in danger of never experiencing a childhood. She will be married early and have to raise her own family while she is still a child. She will probably never learn to read or write and will be unable to break out of poverty.

Last month we began working in Kwale, Kenya to address the issues that girls like Grace are facing every day. Girls in Kwale are some of the most disadvantaged in East Africa; stuck within a cycle of poverty, they have no prospect of reaching their full potential. However, despite these limitations, the girls do have ambition, as Grace told us:

"The girls from this area have got great ambition and with the right guidance and support they will make it... There is a girl who wants to be a doctor and she says that she wants that because there are no doctors in her area and she has witnessed her parents losing their lives."

The work launched last month will promote the value of girls' education through rallying community support, through teacher training, and through boys and girls clubs and media campaigns. If you want to find out more please visit: www.build-africa.org.uk/girls.



“ Grace is in danger of never experiencing a childhood ”

Sponsored by Comic Relief and the Big Lottery Fund



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Leading by example: how one teacher is tackling absenteeism head-on

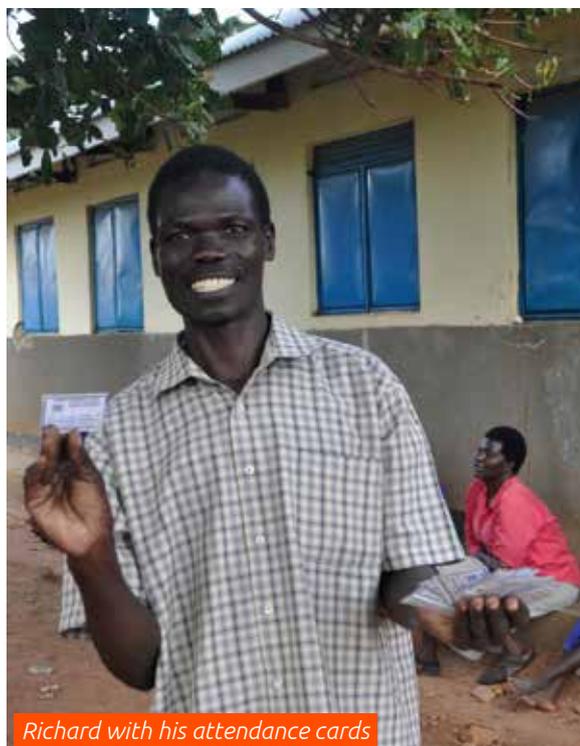
Children fail at school for many reasons, but in rural Kenya and Uganda low teacher morale and motivation is a major factor. That is why we partner with like-minded organisations, such as STIR Education, to encourage staff members to put their ideas into practice, to act as 'bright spots' that inspire change in their school and in the wider education system.

At a recent ceremony STIR awarded a number of successful 'change makers', teachers who have come up with innovative and effective ways of combatting their classroom issues. One of those nominees, Richard Omukata, is a fourth year teacher at Build Africa-supported St. Aloysius Primary School in Uganda. His problem is not an uncommon one: how to stop the rampant absenteeism at his school; due, in part, to parents making their children work at home and on the farm during school time.



"The innovation has helped ensure that children stay at school"

Due to the impact of the scheme other teachers are interested in using the cards in their classrooms and the school has decided to adopt the cards in the coming term to promote attendance.



Richard with his attendance cards

Attendance cards

"After thinking through how I could ensure that the pupils came to school I came up with the idea of using attendance cards. Every child would get five cards, a card per day covering all the week days. The children would go home with the cards and would have to bring them back to me early morning every day, as well as after breaks and lunchtime.

Due to the cards all the children were eager to come to school every day and in good time. Pupils would tell their parents that the cards were needed in school by the teacher; this ensured that they did not take any of the duties given to them by their parents during school time. Since they were collected when the bell rang all the pupils would be in class at the right time and ready to start their lessons. The cards also have the teacher's and parent's number on them so there is communication if there is a challenge or if the child is sick and cannot come to school.

The innovation has helped ensure that children stay at school. It has also helped me identify pupils who have difficulties coming to school. I would then call their parents to discuss attendance and how it was affecting their performance".

By recognising the commitment and enterprise of teachers like Richard, Build Africa and STIR Education are addressing problems such as pupil absenteeism head-on. It is proof that with the proper support and recognition real change for the better can start with one simple idea, an idea that can have immediate and wide-ranging impact.

Calling all teachers!

We're searching for a team of inspiring UK teachers to come with us to Uganda and experience the challenges of teaching in rural Africa! Join us in April 2015 for 10 days that will change your life.

Find out more at www.build-africa.org.uk/teaching





Helen (third from left) with her school friends

Everybody deserves a second chance

In an attempt to get dropouts back into school Build Africa is training Second Chance Champions (model pupils who have re-enrolled after dropping-out) to encourage others to re-join. They do this by meeting with the absent pupils and their guardians to talk through the issues that are keeping them out of the classroom and discussing possible solutions. It is a unique approach that is already reaping rewards. Over the past three months 41 pupils (24 girls and 17 boys) at eight Build Africa-supported schools have re-enrolled because of the initiative.

Helen's story

At 16 Helen is a little older than most of the pupils in year 6. But there is a very good reason for that. Helen told us how her own second chance led to her becoming a role model for others:

"In 2013 I dropped out of school because my parents couldn't afford the school fees or buy the uniform, books and pens I needed. I was always being sent home to collect school fees and materials and would spend up to a week at home at a time. After missing almost one month of school I felt tired and gave up on it completely.

I started working in people's gardens to survive. The money I made would be used to help the family because our father wasn't supporting us. But I really missed school and wished that I could get back sometime, particularly when I met my old school friends when I was walking to the gardens to work. Sometimes when I saw them in a distance I would hide because I was embarrassed.

My good friends encouraged me to go back to school and some of my relatives were determined to get me back, especially my grandmother who said she would pay my debts in school as long as my father was willing to support me from then on. He agreed and although I had to repeat a year, I am happy to be back to school.

I am currently enjoying science, looking forward to sitting my end of primary exams next year and going on to secondary school. I wish to become a nurse in the future".

From drop-out to ambassador

"But I am also an ambassador of education in the community. I attended one forum where we were encouraged to support absent pupils. There are many children who drop out of school for different reasons: most will drop

out due to lack of school fees, while others stay at home to babysit their younger siblings. Some parents also ask their children to go with them to the gardens, which eventually leads to them dropping out".



Helen

"I think dropping out of school affects one's future dreams, since most of the girls end up getting married early, and become poor farmers in the village. I want other girls to follow their dreams just as I am doing now."

Overcoming the ordeal of sanitary protection

Caroline is a 14 year-old-girl at Akeit Primary School in Uganda. Both of Caroline's parents are poor farmers who pay for her sanitary protection with the money they make selling chickens. But this isn't a reliable source of income and on the days when there are no chickens to sell Caroline has no choice but to resort to dirty rags. She stays at home because the thought of messing up her uniform in class is just too distressing, and as the days at home mount up she is in danger of falling too far behind to catch up.



Caroline

I feel confident that I can now achieve my life goal of becoming a nurse.

A simple and affordable solution

But with Build Africa's help, Caroline won't be dropping out of school. And all because of the training that we have given her in the use of reusable towels, and much more besides:

"Before I got knowledge and skills in making reusable towels, I found it expensive to buy the already made pads. I also didn't know about menstrual hygiene and sexual reproductive health, especially concerning how to keep my personal hygiene during menstruation."

Even better, the money that Caroline's parents used to spend on expensive ready-made towels can now pay for learning materials:

"My mother instead spends the money from selling chickens to buy me books and pens. Because these towels are reusable I always have them in hand at school in cases of emergency. And because of this, I attend school regularly unlike before when I at times missed school during my periods".

She has become something of an ambassador for the reusable towels as well, spreading the word about the

Deborah Amongin is a senior teacher in Akeit Primary School:

"Since the training the number of girls absent from school during menstruation has drastically fallen, since nowadays they have pads handily unlike in the past when they found it hard to access sanitary wear. The knowledge gained has also helped me to offer guidance and counselling to girls and this has built a better rapport between the girls and me. It has also helped the girls to open up and freely discuss issues and challenges relating to their development".

benefits of such a cheap and practical solution to sanitary protection:

"I have also been able to share this skill with two other women in my village who are nowadays able to make and use these pads. I also always encourage my fellow girls to make and use these pads. We were told during the training that menstruation is not a disease and we should go about our daily routines normally so I have learnt to be positive during the days of my period and I do encourage my friends to do the same."



Displaying one of the precious reusable towels

Fundraising news



Challenging the channel

Brave or bonkers, it's your call. Either way, our very own Katie Owen did something really remarkable on August 31st to raise funds for Build Africa. Her challenge: to overcome the elements, the jellyfish, the sickness and exhaustion, to swim in a relay team from England to France.

"You need a lot of planets to align to get a channel relay away successfully: patience is the key. It was third time lucky when I jumped off the Optimist, our boat, at 11am and swam to shore. But I could feel the sun on my back and the nervousness and anticipation I had felt beforehand just disappeared. As I stood on shore and waved to the boat I thought 'this is it, give it your all', and sheer excitement overwhelmed me as I made my first few strokes in the water.

The team was cheering and before I knew it my hour stint was up and the next challenge began...unexpected sea sickness! Five hours later each member had achieved their first stint and it was round two calling me. I was happy to get off the rocking boat and back in the water. Swimming alongside massive tankers and ferries was quite an iconic moment and marked what we thought would be around the halfway point.



'...after a gruelling thirteen hours we realised the tide was pushing us too far off course.'



Katie, 3rd from left, and the Build Africa team

But after a beautiful sunset darkness descended and things started to get tough. Disorientation set in and energy levels flagged. My dad had given me a motivational talk just before we set off. He said 'when it gets tough, you'll be tougher', and that's what kept me going ...along with singing songs of course.



Taking the plunge

The team ventured on but after a gruelling thirteen hours we realised the tide was pushing us too far off course. Unfortunately, with some regret I must report the realities of challenging the channel halted our efforts and we made the tough decision to turn back; we didn't quite make it the whole way across but by George did we have a crack at it.

The challenge confirmed my belief that the mind can push the body to incredible limits and that I have a lot of grit and determination when I need it. And as a pool swimmer I've certainly been converted to the sense of freedom you get when swimming in the sea. It was an amazing experience that the team and I will share forever".

Katie's almost there! Help her reach her fundraising target by visiting www.JustGiving.com and searching for **Katie Owen** or **Build Africa**.

Build Africa's 2015 Channel Swim

Take the plunge with us! Contact Katharine Clark at katharine@build-africa.org.uk, or call **01892 519619**, to book your place on our 2015 channel relay team.

Find out more at www.build-africa.org.uk/swim



Rave Against Poverty!



BLOTTFEST!
The Final Battle
2014

Having started from two speakers and a car battery, the Blottfest comedy and music festival held in aid of Build Africa has had its biggest year yet.

Held in late August, this year's event had a wide range of acts, including stand-up comics, DJ sets, local musicians and professional dancers; and an eclectic mix of music, from jazz to trance.

Blottfest has been inspiring young people to help Build Africa since 2010. It has highlighted the problems that our partner communities in rural Africa face, and raised £1,800 in the process.

Organiser, David Blott, said: "It's fantastic to see a generation of fundraisers coming together to contribute to such a worthwhile cause. Blottfest raised over £500 this year, showing that young people are still well and truly against poverty."

If Blottfest has inspired you to get involved with a Build Africa event, or to come up with a novel fundraising idea of your own, then please get in touch. We could feature your event in a future edition of Habari! Contact Katharine Clark at katharine@build-africa.org.uk or call **01892 519619**.



Leave something special and make a real difference

As one wise man said: 'It's not what you take when you leave this world behind you. It's what you leave behind you when you go'.

If you do choose to include Build Africa in your Will, you will be leaving behind something very special indeed. We promise to use your legacy gift to directly support our beneficiaries in rural Africa. Any legacy, whatever the amount, makes a huge difference to our work.

A legacy is a generous gift which can have a long-lasting impact; from giving children the education they deserve, to helping their parents invest in their family's future through

joining a savings and loans group, to providing a source of clean drinking water for an entire school community.

Our mission is to build a better and brighter future for the rural communities we work with. Legacies left by supporters of our work, just like you, go a long way in enabling us to change thousands of lives for years to come.

If you have any questions about leaving a gift to Build Africa in your Will, please call Abi on **01892 519619** or email abi@build-africa.org.uk.



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