

HABARI

A voice for young people in Africa

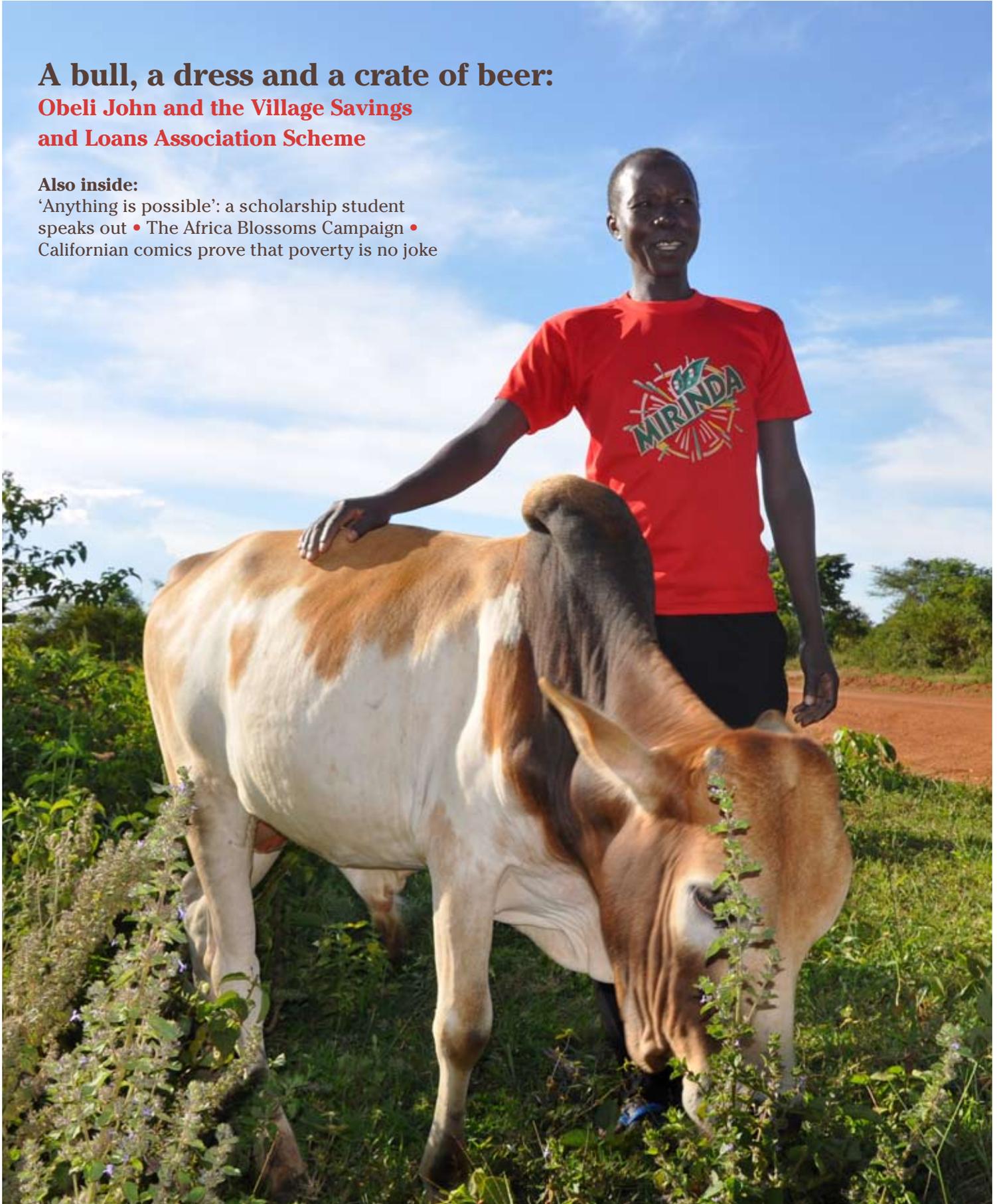


Issue 41 | Autumn 2010

A bull, a dress and a crate of beer: Obeli John and the Village Savings and Loans Association Scheme

Also inside:

'Anything is possible': a scholarship student speaks out • The Africa Blossoms Campaign • Californian comics prove that poverty is no joke



Editor's letter

Welcome to the Autumn 2010 edition of Habari. The stories highlight some important themes in the continued success of the Build a School and Build an Income campaigns. The Village Savings and Loans scheme is currently giving nearly thirteen thousand resolute individuals the chance to put their entrepreneurial ideas into practice, to invest in their land and in their children's education.

Communities are also coming together to form School Management Committees dedicated to the ongoing improvement of their local schools. And role models, like the scholarship student featured in the Kwandoo Primary School update, are giving their peers something to aspire to.

We are making great progress, due largely to the fact that we develop models which can be adopted by any community to improve their school and increase their income. Health clubs are an important example of this process, educating children about healthy living and reproductive health. As are 'tippy taps'! "Tippy what?" you may ask. All is revealed inside.

Build Africa is also currently involved in some exciting fundraising drives. We would love you to get involved in our Africa Blossoms or The Big Give campaigns. See inside for details.

Your Views

Lastly, I would like to thank all of you who completed the questionnaire we sent with the last edition of Habari. It's a great way for us to find out what you think of Habari, among other things, and the aspects of our work that you most want to hear about. 45% of those who responded rated the newsletter as excellent, which is great news but clearly there is room for improvement! Habari is your newsletter and I will be using your feedback to shape content in the future. Don't forget that you can always write to me with any questions or suggestions.

80% of you said that the quantity of mailings you received was about right. For those of you who requested fewer mailings, we are adding these customisations to your supporter records and the changes will be in place shortly.

Congratulations to Mr Baldwin, from Southampton, who was the lucky winner of the vouchers. Happy shopping!



Chris Pearson
Editor, Habari



We have moved!

Our new address is:

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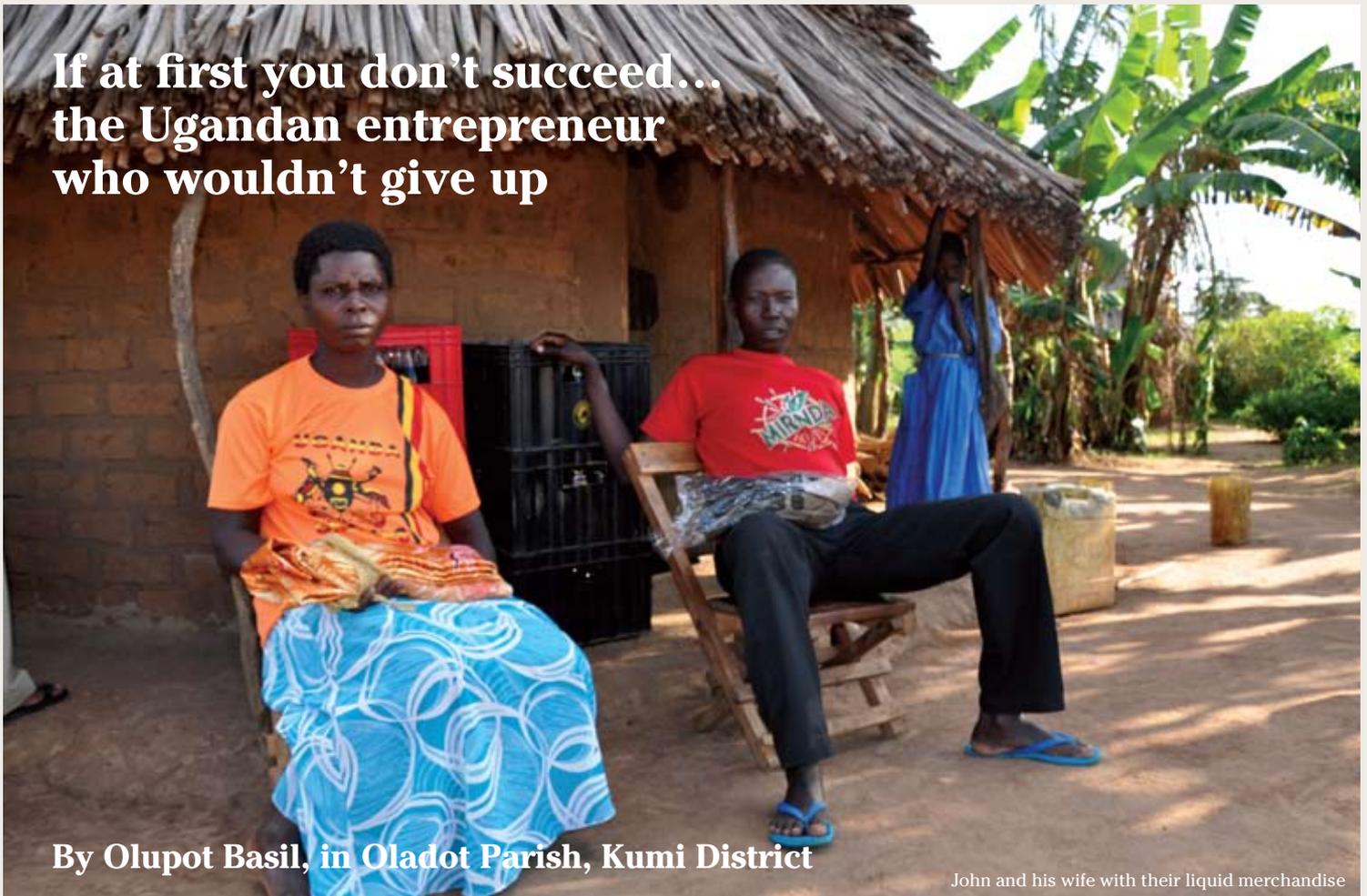
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If at first you don't succeed... the Ugandan entrepreneur who wouldn't give up



By Olupot Basil, in Oladot Parish, Kumi District

John and his wife with their liquid merchandise

Obeli John is a 41 year old farmer with seven children. As a member of the 'Adokun Ocan' (or 'Out of Poverty') Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) he has seen his life turned around over the past 12 months.

A question of trust

And it nearly didn't happen. Because when John first listened to Build Africa's VSLA Community Based Trainers back in April 2009 he was reminded of the money some of his friends had lost at the hands of an unscrupulous organisation just a year before. But the more he learned the more reassured he became, particularly as he had been harbouring a secret desire to start a business to improve the welfare of his family. All he needed was the financing. After two months of scrutiny and discussion he decided to form a savings group, setting himself up as a butcher in his village. Unfortunately, the business wasn't as successful as he'd hoped, largely due to the poor supply of goats.

Undaunted, he decided to concentrate on saving money to build capital for his next business venture. After saving for forty-eight weeks his capital had reached 250,000 Ugandan Shillings (approximately £72). As a result he was eligible for a pay out of 385,600 Shillings. He spent this money to buy a bull that would help him cultivate a bigger area of land.

He also bought his wife a mattress and a Gomesi (a formal African dress worn for special occasions and a traditional Christmas gift bought by a husband for his wife). His wife was overjoyed with the gift since she had never owned a Gomesi before.

And yet John didn't forget his desire to go into business. He set aside around 100,000 Shillings to set up an enterprise dealing in soft drinks and beer in the trading center. He had watched people ride 3km to the nearest trading center to buy beer and soda and thought of exploiting this market. So far the business is doing well: he sells approximately one crate of beer each week.

John's 'walk of joy'

John believes this is just the beginning of what he calls his 'walk of joy'. His group is starting another cycle of saving and he looks forward to increasing his share value. John summed up the changes he has experienced by saying "thanks to Build Africa my life has totally changed and everybody can now see the improvement in my status".

The Village Savings and Loans Association scheme is flourishing. In the 15 months since it began it has expanded to cover 56 parishes in rural Uganda, benefiting 12,831 people (4,506 men and 8,325 women) in 490 groups. Obeli John's story of courage and determination speaks for them all.



Peer educators “mending Africa”

Health clubs are an essential part of the School Development Plan process. Their function is to promote community awareness about HIV and AIDS, to teach young people how to live safely and healthily and to develop life skills such as leadership, public speaking and debating. A clean water supply and a healthy, disease free learning environment are also critical. Elected by their fellow students, peer educators are taught communication skills and health issues such as sexual health, drugs, personal and environmental hygiene and HIV and AIDS at intensive one week training courses. They are then responsible for communicating these issues to both fellow students and to the community in general.

Raising awareness

Kabanza Judy is one such peer educator and a pupil at Itherero Primary School in the Naivasha District of Kenya. She explains why peer educators are important and what her role entails:

“My name is Judy Kabanza and I am 11 years old. I have been in this school for one year now. When you are a peer educator you can learn more, and help others if they have problems.

My role is to make the environment clean, teach others that it's not good for the environment to be dirty, because it will cause many diseases. HIV and AIDS is a very bad disease. That's why we are told to do everything to be well.”



Reducing social inequality

“When we were training we felt like we were mending Africa, because we learnt about peer education. We learnt about being assertive, that is claiming and demanding our rights. We also learnt about stigma, stigma is when someone who has HIV is stigmatised, because they are told they cannot play with others, they cannot talk with others because they may spread HIV. People living with HIV and AIDS should not be stigmatised.

Now we are very happy because the compound is clean and there is no disease like cholera and Bilharzia, and now with these big rains there are no dirty things that can be spread.”

Brighter future

People in Sub-Saharan Africa have the worst health, on average, in the world. The continent accounts for almost half the world's deaths of children under five, has the highest maternal mortality rate, and bears a heavy toll from HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. Diseases like cholera are the stuff of history books in the UK. In Kenya and Uganda, where scant rains have meant that many people are surviving off dirty, germ-infested water, cholera outbreaks are still all too common. In addition tropical diseases like Bilharzia, a potentially life-threatening infection caused by fresh water parasites, are prevalent in both countries. Through its School Development Plans Build Africa is improving access to much needed basic health care for many people living in remote areas.

Kabanza Judy (right) with friend



The 'Tippy Tap' (patent pending)



They say that necessity is the mother of invention and at Kasechi Primary School the proof comes in the shape of a simple, efficient, low maintenance hand washing facility called the 'tippy tap'. Comprising a stick, some string, a plastic container and the most basic of wooden frames, the apparatus is going some way to improving hygiene at the school.

Simple but effective

The 'tippy tap' is a triumph of home grown initiative and proof that the most rudimentary technology is sometimes the most effective. Mr. Omuran Jovan, the head teacher, told us:

"Before we thought of the 'tippy tap' the school had a portable metallic container with a tap as a washing facility, but the tap often broke down. We thought of a 'tippy tap' as a cheap hand washing apparatus we could afford since it requires local materials to make it but at the same time is fun to use. The children fetch the water and fill it always. They were very excited to see the facility and got motivated to use the apparatus. They also participate in repairing it. We encourage them to build similar ones at home."

Immediate improvements

"Poor hygiene makes children vulnerable to diseases like diarrhoea, cholera, typhoid, trachoma, and other skin infections which affect attendance. The hand washing facility is one of the methods we employ to combat these. It is fixed next to the toilets so the children are reminded to wash their hands after visiting the toilets. It is a must for every pupil and has been one of the subjects that our health club has covered."

Situated in the Bukedea District of Uganda, Kasechi School has made great leaps forward since Build Africa began assisting it in 2008, not least in the area of health and hygiene. New latrines have been built and the health club has been passing on messages through drama, songs and poetry that cover topics as far ranging as the threat of HIV and AIDS, the importance of a clean school environment and clean clothing, proper use of the latrines and the dangers of cigarettes, alcohol and underage sex.

The value of water

Surrounded by swampland and situated in an area prone to drought, the Kasechi community has a profound appreciation and respect for water: for drinking, cooking and sanitation. According to Mr. Omuran, it means simply "life and health" to them. In its turn the 'tippy tap' is proving a simple but successful method for preserving life and health at the school.



It really couldn't be easier to use: when stepped on the stick acts as lever which pulls the string and tips the container.

A community coming together

By Rebecca Webb in the Mwala District of Kenya



The pupils and teachers of Kwandoo Primary School have had very little to be positive about until recently. Situated in the high, hilly, semi-arid district of Mwala in Kenya, the local community has struggled to survive one of the worst droughts to hit the region in recent years.

Typically the young people have been amongst the hardest hit. Some children have been forced to leave their homes as their parents look for food and water for their animals, while many others have been absent from class because their parents are – quite understandably - too preoccupied with day to day survival to support the school properly. Some children are simply too weak to attend.

Parent power

But Kioki Vincent, Deputy Head at Kwandoo, has seen an improvement of late:

“This school faces many problems but we have begun to overcome the many challenges facing it. Most importantly we have organised the School Management



A teacher holding bags of beans donated by the parents

Committee to talk to the parents to try and encourage them to become more involved in their child’s education.

Today we have over 100 parents who have come to the school to meet with the committee to discuss academic standards and the way forward for this year. The parents have said that they are not able to provide food. Unfortunately there is no

assistance from the Government either, so the parents have begun bringing in 90kg bags of maize and beans for their children’s lunch. We have seen a huge difference in the children since we decided to ask the parents to contribute. If the children are hungry they cannot concentrate. Now they are concentrating better, and physically they are more alert and healthier. They are happier to be here.”

The role of the School Management Committee

The School Management Committee plays a central role in the management of the school. The head teacher is accountable to the parents as well as the District Education Officer and it plays a key role in providing community leadership in the running of the school. At Kwandoo the meetings are regular and well-attended, testimony to the commitment of the parents under even the most difficult circumstances. Kioki Vincent is proud of the achievements the school is making:

“Last year, three quarters of our pupils went to secondary school. This number is increasing, largely because there is a new secondary school in the area with affordable fees. The children here have a hope for the future.

Since working with Build Africa, we have seen a big difference in performance and enrolment. Our average mark has gone from 270 to 285 out of 400 in one year, well over the pass rate of 250. Our aim is to improve year on year and to be the best school in the district. I am proud to say that we have a very strong School Management Committee which communicates regularly with our pupils. Parents and pupils here are willing and ready to improve the performance of the school.”





An inspiration to all: the story of Kwandoo's star pupil

Kinako Joy is something of a celebrity at Kwandoo Primary School. If one person were to exemplify the aspirations Kioki Vincent has for the school, then this 14 year old secondary school student would be that person. After completing her last year at Kwandoo Primary School in 2009, Joy gained a remarkable average mark of 387 out of 400 in her leaving exams, becoming top girl in her district. As a result she was awarded a scholarship from Equity Bank for support throughout secondary school and university. This is her story in her own words:

"I come from a poor family. I have one sister and two brothers and my parents are subsistence farmers. We have a lack of money but I worked hard towards my Kenya Certificate of Primary Education exams. My head teacher asked me to fill in a form, and I had a meeting at school with the people from the bank.

When I found out that I had won I was overjoyed. I remember the day so well. That week I was supposed to be going shopping with my mother, but she kept

postponing the trip. Then on the day that I found out I was given an allowance to go shopping. I was able to buy my uniform, shoes, bible, games kit, blankets, stationery and I was given my bus fare and pocket money to spend by Equity Bank. We celebrated that evening and the whole family was so happy."

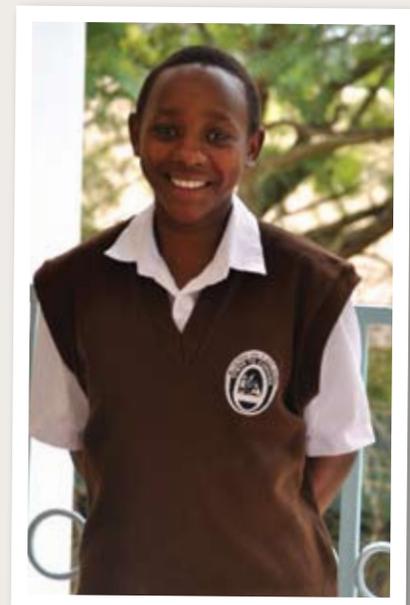
'I want to be a Neurosurgeon'

"When I leave secondary school I want to go to university and when I finish there I want to be a Neurosurgeon. I want to help people and to treat them. There is a neighbouring family whose eldest has become a doctor, and his siblings are all following suit. I want to inspire my brothers and sisters to do well. My hope for Kwandoo Primary School is that if I become a Neurosurgeon I will be able to help the pupils transform their lives as well.

In my spare time I like to read books, magazines and newspapers. What I would like to say to anyone is it is important to work hard. If I had not worked hard I would not be here now, and they (Equity Bank) only take people who pass. Anything is possible!"

The Deputy Head of her old primary school is in complete agreement:

"The pupils of Kwandoo talk about Joy all the time, and what she has achieved. It has really motivated her peers because the pupils here want to do as well as her, or better. They all aspire to be like her. It is very rare for someone to win this place and she is the only girl in the area to be sponsored. We are all very proud of her."





An interview with Adoa Dennis

Build Africa Programme Assistant and Liverpool fan

Adoa Dennis is a Build Africa Programme Assistant based in the Kumi district of Uganda. His job is to oversee the establishment and smooth running of Village Savings and Loans groups, liaising with the communities involved and contributing to the ongoing improvement of the scheme. We asked Dennis to tell us about his work for us:

What does your average work day consist of?

I reach the office by 8am. I sit at my desk and finish a few jobs before I call the Community Based Trainers (the people responsible for getting the groups up and running) to get their respective locations. By around 11am I am off to the field to meet a group. I have a lunch of rice and beans in the field at 1.30pm and by 2pm I am meeting the second group to support them as well.

Are there any projects you have been involved with that you feel particularly proud of?

I am proud that the group members have been able to support their children to stay in school and they are able to access medical treatment by borrowing from the groups.

Do you have an example of a member of the community benefiting from the scheme?

Yes, I recently met a 60 year old woman called Demeteria Aseku who takes care of two orphans (a 5 year old girl and a 7 year old boy). She is a member in Komolo Tukum Women's Group and has saved around 94,000 Ugandan Shillings (approximately £27) in 38 weeks, a tremendous achievement!



She is very happy because saving has allowed her to develop her farming practice, growing ground nuts, cassava and sorghum (a cereal plant used as fodder) and keeping chickens. She does not spend all her money when she sells her produce: instead she saves some of it with the group. She is happy because previously there was nowhere she could safely keep the money, but now she has got the safest place to keep her extra income.

She told me that she is now able to access medical treatment through the welfare fund which was not the case before. She is proud because she is able to take care of her two orphans, supporting them at school, buying books and school uniforms for them. And when she presented the problem of a leaking hut to the group every member agreed to contribute 500 Shillings for the house to be thatched afresh.

When I visited the group Aseku kept referring to a very beautiful pig that was grazing in her compound. She told me she was able to buy it using a loan she had taken out from the group. She bought it for 15,000 Shillings when it was still a piglet. Now she can sell the pig for around 50,000 Shillings. She is very grateful to Build Africa for organising such groups in her community because she has now learnt how to save for the future.

What did you aspire to be when you were younger?

I wanted to be a policeman, because my community had a lot of drop outs, girls who became pregnant while still at school and thefts in and around the school. I felt it was only the police that could end all that. But as I grew up I realized there were other, better ways of ending such behaviour. So I decided to concentrate on my studies and now I work for Build Africa.

Would you describe your job as stressful? How do you cope with workloads?

Yes it is, but I have learnt to cope with it. It is very demanding because the communities we deal with are illiterate and in need of my attention every now and then (especially in record keeping and loan recovery). I feel very proud when I help a group to share out the savings successfully, or resolve issues within the group. Such tremendous achievements are the ones that keep me going on.



How does the Build an Income programme complement the Build a School programme?

First and foremost, when Build Africa supports a school the number of savings groups in the area increases. Rural people are eager to join groups so that they can support their children at school: it is proven that when savings groups are established attendance at local schools increases. Some parents have also gone the extra mile to borrow from the groups so that they can make community contributions towards school construction. Members can borrow from the welfare fund so as to meet the needs of the family, such as school fees, medical treatment and sometimes feeding the children.

What do you like to do outside work?

I visit my sister's place a lot outside work, usually to have dinner with her. To tell you the truth I'm not a fan of cooking so the more time I spend eating at hers the better! If I'm not at hers then I'm at home watching movies or television series (I love comedies like Mr. Bean) or I read newspapers. I also listen to music, particularly gospel and oldie music. I really like Michael Jackson. During my weekend I hang out in the evenings with friends and sometimes travel to Soroti just to relax and have fun. I also love watching football, especially the Premier League. I support Liverpool FC and I only miss their matches due to sickness.



The Africa Blossoms campaign

Gender equality is naturally a primary objective of all of Build Africa's programmes. In the previous edition of Habari we featured profiles of some truly inspirational women living in rural Kenya and Uganda. In this edition we continue the gender theme by asking our UK supporters to help raise awareness of issues affecting girls in rural East Africa.

What is Africa Blossoms? Africa Blossoms is a campaign being launched by Build Africa to highlight the importance of girls' education in rural Africa and of giving African women the chance to earn an income. The campaign will raise vital funds for health education, for the provision of sanitary towels and the building of separate toilets for girls and boys. It will also help us communicate to the rural communities where we work the value of sending girls to school, in terms of better health, reduced infant mortality and improved income opportunities.



The campaign was launched by Build Africa supporter Lynda Baroness Chalker of Wallasey on the 10th September in our new Build Africa office in Tunbridge Wells. The evening was a great success, with the office decked out in African decorations and a band of African drummers entertaining those present.



Get involved

There are so many ways you could come together to do something amazing:

- **Love Vintage!** Host an old fashioned tea party with cucumber sandwiches, earl grey tea with a dash of gin and cup cakes. Ask your very happy and grateful friends to donate £8 each and buy sanitary towels for a school in Uganda;
- **Ladies who lunch!** Arrange lunch somewhere for free. All bring a dish and with the £10 you save on that Panino & latte you can send the money to our Africa Blossoms Campaign. It will help fund our Ugandan radio talk shows that are encouraging parents to keep their girls at school!;
- **Book Clubs!** You never have the time? Organise a one night only book club based on an African themed book. Treat friends to wine and chocolates as you put your grey cells to the test and ask them to donate £10 each for leaving pleased that they had such an educational evening! The money you raise will be spent on health clubs which prevent teenage pregnancy and the risk of HIV.



As the campaign develops we will update you about ways you can get involved. In the meantime please do get in touch with all of your great ideas!

If you have any questions or would like to receive an information pack please contact Elaine Gordon on 01892 519619 or email elaine@build-africa.org.uk.

Fundraising News

'Did you hear the one about the school in Kenya?' Californian comics come together to support Build Africa

On August 9 'Comedy for a Cause' took over the stage at the Northside Theatre in San Francisco to raise money for Mbukuni School in Machakos District, Kenya.

The theatre hosted a night of stand-up comedy and improvisation in support of the school. Local comedians Jeff Jacobson, Christine Silver and Sue Walden donated their talents in the fundraising efforts to prove that poverty is no joke, raising \$590 in the process.

The idea for 'Comedy for a Cause' started in May 2010 as an international project taken on by four women from different sides of the Atlantic and brought together in Northern California for Leadership Training. One of the organisers, Kim O'Donoghue, told us: "I was acutely conscious of living a privileged life, where I want for nothing; and here I was, going off to lovely California for training when in some countries children don't even have food, water or schools. I was lucky to meet Linda Rogers, Debbie Rosenfelt and Bridget Sipe who shared a similar passion!"

'Comedy for a Cause' has since evolved and gained momentum, from a shared interest to help children in developing countries to a focused mission and commitment to raise substantial funds for Mbukuni Primary School. Future events are planned for Seattle and London.

If you have a great idea for a fundraising event for Build Africa then don't delay, contact Helen Sharpe at helen@build-africa.org.uk or call 01892 519619.



Jeff Jacobson



Christine Silver



Sue Walden (with a member of the audience participating in one of her improvisation sketches)

TWENTY FIVE DOLLARS

- \$25 - TWO XXL MALE UNITARDS
- \$25 - AN EIGHTH OF AN IMPOSSIBLE TO USE ESPRESSO MACHINE
- \$25 - ONE NEW USED TIRE FOR YOUR CAR
- \$25 - THE FIRST OF TWENTY PAYMENTS ON YOUR BOTOX LAYAWAY PLAN
- \$25 - THREE PAIRS OF FAT LACES FOR YOUR CANADIAN ROLLERBLADES
- \$25 - A REALLY EXPENSIVE DATE AT MCDONALD'S
- \$25 - BUYING THE MBUKUNI SCHOOL IN KENYA CHAIRS, DESKS, LIGHTS, DRINKING WATER AND GIVING KIDS ROOM TO LEARN.

COMEDY FOR A CAUSE. TICKETS \$25.

August 9th, 2010 - 7:30 p.m.
Fort Mason Center, San Francisco, CA
Call (415) 345-7575 for tickets.
www.justgiving.com/MbukuniPrimarySchoolKenya

What does \$25 get you these days?

Fundraising News

theBigGive

The Big Give: a way to double your donation

With the economic downturn we are all feeling the pinch and trying to make our money go further. Well we might have found a way to do just that with your donations!

Build Africa will be taking part in the Big Give Christmas Challenge once again this year. Donations made on-line during the challenge period will be doubled. Anyone can join in.

Log on to the Big Give website (www.thebiggive.org.uk) to make a donation. You can find the Build Africa page easily by putting our name in the 'By Keyword' field.

Once the challenge has started this page will show a 'Double your Donation' sign and any donations from just £5 to £5,000 will be doubled!

Our target for the challenge is £55,000. With your help we could end up by raising a massive £110,000! This would cover the cost of building at least three schools in Kenya and would make a wonderful Christmas present for hundreds of children there who are desperate to acquire a decent education.

We will be counting down to the date on our website. So keep watching! And then join us in making hundreds of children very happy.

For more information please contact Elaine Gordon on 01892 519619 or email elaine@build-africa.org.uk.

Our online shop

Build Africa has launched its brand new online shop, featuring a range of fun and practical gifts that will put a smile on the face of a loved one. For just a small amount of money you will also be changing the lives of the rural poor in Uganda and Kenya.

Did you know, for example, that by giving a Build Africa gift you could be giving girls an education?

Gifts such as sanitary towels really do make a difference, because with better sanitary protection comes the confidence to go to school and with improved attendance comes the opportunity to sit exams, to succeed at secondary school and ultimately to become an active, informed and well respected member of the community.

All of our gifts improve the quality of lives of the people we work with. So if you are thinking of buying a gift that makes a real difference then look no further than Build Africa's online shop.

Just log on to www.build-africa.org.uk and click on the shopping button.



The Build Africa Home Money Box

Do you always have old coins weighing down your pockets or sitting in dusty piles around your house? Loose change can make a big change to the lives of young people in Kenya and Uganda. So why not collect your pennies in one of our new Home Money Boxes?

For a box please contact Celia Mahoney at celia@build-africa.org.uk or call 01892 519619.

