



## Celebrating Children

*The International Day of the African Child* is celebrated every 16th June to commemorate the courage of children demanding their rights to a good quality education in their own language. It also highlights the ongoing struggle for education, health and security faced by children across Africa.

This edition of Advantage Africa's newsletter is dedicated to children, and more specifically to the thousands of vulnerable girls and boys we support in Kenya and Uganda. We profile some of our work in helping disadvantaged children experience a childhood where they can play, learn, be secure and feel a sense of belonging.

One example of this is the **Kids Club** pictured on this page, run by our partner Rescue Team for HIV & AIDS in Kibwezi, Kenya. Over one hundred girls and boys of all ages attend the club every Sunday and take part in games, sport, drawing and life skills training as well as catching up with their friends. All of the children, many of whom are orphans, live in poverty and in families affected by HIV & AIDS.

The club provides an opportunity for children to learn about health, HIV and other issues affecting their often difficult lives and to talk with adult mentors. Crucially, it also gives them the space and opportunity to let off steam, forget their problems, be creative, laugh and quite simply, be children. Iverson Musya, who runs the club says 'These children can't wait to come every week to have fun and learn. The club is having a positive effect on the whole community!'

As you read this and on 16th June please remember children across Africa and our work to help those disadvantaged by poverty, disability and HIV. We want all the girls and boys supported by Advantage Africa to be equipped with the confidence and skills to reach their potential, and ultimately transform their communities. After all, they are Africa's future.

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## The Stories of Five Children: How Advantage Africa is creating opportunities for boys and girls in East Africa

### Ronald

#### Starting to lead in the community

Fifteen-year-old Ronald is an orphan living with his elderly grandmother. He never misses Rescue Team's Sunday Kids Club! He's an enthusiastic user of the library that Advantage Africa recently helped establish at the Team's Resource Centre and also helps the adult leaders run the Club activities. He says 'Kids Club trains us how to live, and helps children whose parents have passed away. I get good information here, I like coming to read, play games and help out'.

#### Project insight

The Kids Club means so much to the children and numbers are growing. It costs just £20 a week to run but £500 is now needed for playground equipment and £3,000 to build a hall.



Ronald is one of many children living in the Kibwezi community benefiting from Advantage Africa's support, which also includes a weekly nutritious meal for 100 orphans.

### Elizabeth

#### Hope in the Masese slum



Elizabeth wears a smile despite the challenges of living in a slum.

Eight-year-old Elizabeth lives in a slum in Masese, near Jinja, Uganda, with her mother Irene and her two older brothers. Irene is HIV positive and sometimes has severe attacks of epilepsy, so Advantage Africa is helping her to secure a regular supply of medicines.

With all the fear and prejudice surrounding disability it's hard for Elizabeth's mum to get a job and earn a regular income to provide for her children. So Elizabeth and her brothers help her by collecting and selling charcoal. On a good day, they can make 1,000 Ugandan shillings (25 pence). When they manage to sell charcoal, the family eat a meal in the evening and are more likely to sleep. They face difficult choices about how to use the little money they have. Food and education are so important to them and rising costs mean that a box of Irene's epilepsy medication to last a few weeks costs 15,000 Ugandan shillings (£3.80).

Working with our partner Street Child Activists Uganda (SCAU), Advantage Africa is supporting Elizabeth and fourteen other families like hers in Masese to improve their lives. We're helping children and vulnerable adults to have regular health screening and access anti-retroviral and other medicines as well as providing beds and mosquito nets so they can sleep off the floor safe from malaria. We're also funding skills training and small enterprise start-ups to build their confidence and help them work their way out of poverty.

Despite her fragile health, Irene works hard to look after her children and earn money so that Elizabeth and her brothers can go to school. She has learnt how to weave and makes baskets and mats to sell in the local market, wears a permanent smile and warmly hugs all who visit her. Elizabeth is proud of her mother and has a courageous, determined role model to look up to. The project has given her real hope for the future.

#### Project insight

These pictures show mosquito nets being distributed and training in malaria prevention for children in Masese, funded by Advantage Africa. Just £10 can protect a child from life-threatening malaria in a project like this.

Find out more about the Masese child-headed household project by watching a nine-minute film on Advantage Africa's YouTube channel.





## Joel and Sarah

### Regaining their childhood

Joel is five and his sister Sarah is seven. They live with their mother, Janet, in a poor settlement on the outskirts of Kampala, Uganda. Last year, Janet, a widow living with HIV, joined the Gaba Single Parents' Group supported by Advantage Africa. Through the group, she has learned skills to earn an income by making and selling mats and jewellery.

For the first time since her husband died Janet can now provide the opportunities for Joel and Sarah that she has always wanted. With support and friendship from other group members and growing confidence, Janet is now taking anti-retroviral medicine, can pay the rent on her family's small home, buy nutritious food and pay Joel and Sarah's school fees.

Advantage Africa has also helped them bounce back from years of poverty by providing the family with mattresses, bedding, mosquito nets and health kits.

The change in their mother has improved Joel and Sarah's outlook no end; they are thriving and love learning and playing at school. When the Gaba group gets together they play tag with the other members' sons and daughters and are full of mischievous fun - just as children should be.



Help for their family, including support to generate income, has given Joel and Sarah a healthy, secure future to look forward to.

### Project insight

Advantage Africa's partnership with the Single Parent Association of Uganda is helping children from more than 500 single parent families to improve their lives.

We're helping these families to start small enterprises, receive health kits, be counselled through the stigma, fear and trauma of HIV & AIDS and start community schools. £50 helps a single parent family like Joel and Sarah's to get back on their feet after a parent's death.

## Milly

### Overcoming stigma



Milly is learning to walk.

### Project insight

Each month KDPO visit about 30 families affected by disability. The mobility aids they provide cost from £15 for a simple walking frame.

During his recent visit to Kenya, our Programme Manager Rob Aley spent several busy days working with our partner the Kibwezi Disabled People's Organisation (KDPO). A highlight was accompanying their staff Agnes, Nguli and Ndolo on one of their frequent trips by motorbike to visit disabled people in their homes. They'd been told about a disabled child in a small village they'd never been to before, and after a puncture and several stops to ask directions they arrived at the small mud dwelling. There they met four-year-old Milly and her mum, who explained that Milly didn't cry like other children when she was born and remained silent for her first year.

Milly has learning disabilities and epilepsy, both of which are feared, misunderstood and attributed to curses or evil spirits in rural Kenya. Because of this, many disabled children are stigmatised and neglected, but with support from KDPO and Advantage Africa Milly's parents are committed to caring for her properly. Once a month they collect her epilepsy drugs from Kibwezi town and they are helping her to stand up and balance on her own two feet.

During the home visit, KDPO's technician Nguli took measurements to make Milly a frame to help her learn to walk and Agnes talked to Milly's mother about finding an inclusive school. When they finally said *kwaheri* (goodbye) to Milly, her four sisters and their devoted mum, it was clear how encouraged the family were by the visit. Nguli and Ndolo will return as soon as they have built the walking frame at KDPO's mobility workshop and will train Milly and her parents in its use.

## Thinu Appeal

A big 'thank you' to everyone who contributed towards our appeal to complete the special unit for disabled children at Thinu, Kenya (pictured right). We've now raised over £6,000 towards the project and the building work is nearing completion. We're working closely with Thinu Primary School, the Kenyan Ministry of Education and the Ngelani Rural Development Centre to secure the teachers and staff required so the unit can soon be opened. The new facility will enable 40 disabled children to attend school for the first time in their lives.



## Wheelchairs Needed

Our latest public appeal, shown below, aims to provide 91 disabled people in Kibwezi District, Kenya with robust, specially-fitted wheelchairs. These are locally made to withstand rural conditions.



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## Keep on Running

Sponsored runs continue to help Advantage Africa to change lives. American Holly Whittet-Allison dashed the 415 yards of the famous Olney pancake race in February and in April our Director Andrew Betts took on the London Marathon to raise funds for our work.

We still have three places left for the **British London 10k Run** on 10th July. Please contact us to take part in what promises to be a memorable day and help us raise more than £1,000.

## Making a Difference

Your support for Advantage Africa will help children like Makau Collins featured in our October 2009 newsletter. With ongoing rehabilitation and help from our partner KDPO, Makau is now walking with confidence.



£145 buys Joseph a wheelchair



Joseph and 90 others like him are on our waiting list for a wheelchair.

Your donation will help give him the independence he needs.

To donate call  
01234 711005 or visit  
[www.advantageafrica.org](http://www.advantageafrica.org)



Registered Charity 1092719

Milton Keynes  
Community Choir



## Summer Concert

An eclectic mix of traditional, popular, gospel and African music for everyone to enjoy

7.30pm Saturday 2nd July 2011

The Ridgeway Centre  
Featherstone Road  
Wolverton Mill South  
Milton Keynes  
MK12 5TH

Tickets £10 (concessions £8)  
or in advance from  
[tickets@mkcommunitychoir.org](mailto:tickets@mkcommunitychoir.org)

In aid of Advantage Africa

Advantage Africa supports the ideas and work of inspirational people in Africa to overcome poverty and disadvantage. We work in close partnership with determined individuals and community groups, supporting their ideas and plans so that disadvantaged people can improve their lives. This particularly includes people who, alongside poverty, face prejudice and stigma as a result of disability or HIV & AIDS. Advantage Africa provides encouragement, resources, advice and training as well as links to other sources of knowledge, skills and funds.



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