



A Short Story About Honours and Heroes



SPAU group members by the collapsing nursery building

The recent Queen's birthday Honours' List was announced in the press with its usual focus on entertainers and sports personalities recognised for their contributions to making us laugh and cheer. But it's often more inspiring to read about those who have tirelessly volunteered in their local hospitals, youth groups or day centres and also gained recognition for their arguably more useful work. The honours system has long needed reform even before the corruption allegations that now besiege it, but it's fair to say that the list contains many more of these local heroes than the high profile award winners always brought to our attention by a celebrity-obsessed media.

In Africa there is no honours system. The inspirational people supported by Advantage Africa work way beyond the reach of any kind of publicity or financial reward. For many, it is only their faith and empathy with those living in extreme

poverty that motivates them. Jacqueline Nakyne is one such local hero in the community of Bombo, a small village in central Uganda where half of all the children have lost at least one parent to HIV/AIDS. Jacqui single-handedly runs a nursery school for up to 30 children in the village. The poverty there is so extreme that few of the children's parents are able to pay the £3 per term fees. After Jacqui has bought stationery and equipment there is next to nothing available for her own salary. Jacqui's love for the children in her care and the sheer resilience that comes from being a poor person in Africa drive her on. 'Life in Bombo is always hard, but me and my friends here [the children] are just used to it' she says.

Now, recognition and partnership with others are nurturing Jacqui's hope for the future. When the mud-built nursery building started to collapse and became too dangerous for the children, the local council persuaded a businessman to temporarily provide one of his outbuildings rent free. More recently, support from Advantage Africa has enabled work to begin on a brand new nursery and primary school in Bombo - the first the village has ever had. Jacqui says 'The hope of the new school has kept me going every day since I heard about it'.

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Jacqui will never get an OBE, but I hope that her confidence will rise as more people recognise the value of her efforts. She and the children will soon have facilities to be proud of and Jacqui will have a regular salary to ensure her own family doesn't go hungry. More children in Bombo will have the chance of an education and to be inspired by her example, and some will be spared nearly ten miles of walking a day to reach their current place of learning.

When Nelson Mandela was asked 'Who is your hero?' he said: 'My hero does not depend on the position a person occupies. My heroes are those simple men and women who have committed themselves to fighting poverty wherever that is to be found in the world... As long as there are such men and women, the world will continue to be a better place to live in.'

Andrew Betts, Director

From Horror to Hope

When the soldiers came in August 1983, Justine Nalongo (right) didn't understand what was going on. She didn't know the men who came to her house in Nansana, Uganda at the height of the Museveni/Obote bush war. She understood their language and their guns. But she still doesn't know why they took her husband. 'The soldiers came, took him and I never saw him again,' she says. Her friends don't look surprised by this - they have stories of their own; tales of vehicles arriving in the middle of the night, doors kicked in and children left terrified.



Justine started the next day as a single parent of five children. Today she is an active member of the Single Parents' Association of Uganda (SPAU), which, in partnership with Advantage Africa, is working to support single parents to overcome the challenges of poverty, isolation, stigma and HIV/AIDS.

The members of the Nansana SPAU group have found emotional and economic strength in numbers since they came together. Justine and her fellow members are building a poultry

Those Who Can ... Teach!

Maria Kwamboka is a great teacher. However, it sounds as if there's building work going on in her lesson.

On investigation, it turns out to be her forty-seven pupils, all orphans, who are busy rearranging the furniture. As night turns to day they are turning their dormitory into a classroom. They push and scrape their rigid metal-framed beds to create space for wobbly wooden chairs. If it wasn't for this orphans' school in the Ronda slum of Nakuru, Kenya, the majority of these youngsters would be on the streets or involved in child labour.

'It meets the needs of children, provides food, clothes and medical care,' says Maria of the school run by Advantage Africa's partner Learning and Development Kenya (LDK). Maria knows that the children have very special needs. The trauma caused by the deaths of their parents, combined with poverty and sickness in their families have left their scars.



Maria at work

If it wasn't for this orphans' school in Nakuru, Kenya, the majority of these youngsters would be on the streets or involved in child labour.

She also knows that the children depend on her for more than their education. 'These children never bear grudges', she says. 'They want to always please you and try their best. When I correct them, they are willing to change'.

As Maria teaches English to the class, the pupils chime, 'Thirty days have September, April, June and November, all the rest have thirty one...'

These children have had many difficult days in their young lives. As day turns to night and they move the furniture back, they trust in their teacher that there will be brighter times ahead.

Maria and her LDK colleagues can match their students' enthusiasm for learning. Advantage Africa is supporting Maria and five of the other LDK teachers to be trained in early childhood development, adding to the skills and knowledge with which they teach and nurture the children in their care; children for whom they have now become as important as parents.

Tanks and Toilets Together

Diarrhoeal diseases such as cholera and dysentery are the biggest cause of illness in Africa. Advantage Africa continues to support disadvantaged people in the community of Obambo, western Kenya to improve their health through improvements in water and sanitation that reduce the incidence of such diseases.



More water tanks ready for installation

There are now four tanks collecting safe rainwater from the roof of Obambo church. The water from the tanks is delivered to sick and housebound people in the village, some of whom have AIDS-related illnesses.

Ochieng, one of the recipients, is an elderly woman more than 70 years old. She can't see or walk and her two daughters have both died. Ochieng now cares for her four grandchildren in a dilapidated house and has no reliable source

Water, Sanitation and Health in Kenya

38% of people cannot access safe water.

52% do not have adequate sanitation.

50% cannot access affordable medicines.

33% are undernourished.

Source: UN Development Programme.



New latrines at the Obambo clinic

of income. Three times a week, a member of our partner organisation the Obambo Water Group, takes Ochieng's family three jerry cans of safe water. When they can, they also take her some food. Without this support, Ochieng's already difficult life would be more than she could cope with.

Nyakech is another elderly widow supported by the group. She has no children, lives² alone and is frequently sick. As well as water and food, the group gives her

emotional support. When group member Selline Okoth visits her Nyakech is sometimes overcome with delight; she regards Selline as the daughter she never had!

Advantage Africa's support of the water group complements our work with the community to establish and run the clinic there. Donations from our supporters have recently enabled us to fund another rainwater tank and new latrines for the clinic. *Thank you for all your support!*

Progress in Pictures from Mitaboni, Kenya



Advantage Africa is supporting the Mitaboni Special Unit for disabled children. Eating outside whatever the weather (left) will soon be a thing of the past once the new dining hall (above) is completed. Children are now no longer at risk from fires caused by paraffin lamps following the installation of electricity (above right). Funding from Advantage Africa is also enabling teacher Wasike (right) and her colleague Mutuku to undertake courses in special needs education.



Advocacy in Action

Following Gordon Brown's initiative to advance the Millennium Development Goal of basic education for all, Advantage Africa lobbied him and Development Minister Hilary Benn on greater inclusion of disabled children. The Independent newspaper published Brown's education article on their front page and our Director Andrew Betts' response two days later.

'What a difference it will make if the Government, as it calls on other countries to commit to education for all, will be bold in ensuring this includes disabled children, whose existence, dignity and potential are often ignored', wrote Andrew.

Disabled Facts of Life

- In sub-Saharan Africa, up to 80% of disabled children die before their fifth birthday.
- Less than 2% of disabled children in developing countries go to school.
- Of the 115 million children out of school worldwide, 40 million are disabled.
- Over 80% of all disabled people are unemployed.
- Disabled people are three to four times more likely to face sexual abuse or violence than non-disabled people.

Sources: Disability World, World Bank, Leonard Cheshire International, VSO.

Advantage Africa's contribution to the consultation on the UK Government's Development White Paper included a call for sustained funding of community-based rehabilitation services for disabled people. We also helped arrange a public consultation on the Paper in Northampton.

Our work to ensure that disabled people are included in all development initiatives also extends to HIV/AIDS. We have set up the www.africacampaign.org website for the Africa Campaign on Disability and HIV/AIDS. During August our associate in Canada, Jacinta Sweeney, will be lobbying on the issue at the International HIV/AIDS conference in Toronto.

From Horror to Hope

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house with support from Advantage Africa. This will enable them to make money to send their children and even grandchildren to school as well as support the orphans they have taken in to their hearts and homes. The women meet every Thursday to make bricks for the poultry house. Ankle deep in clay, they have already made several thousand of them.

As I take photos of the bricks, I reflect on the physical effort put in by these women, knowing that almost all of them are either elderly or HIV positive widows.

Justine's five adopted orphans giggle from behind the nearby fruit



Members of the Nansana group and their bricks

trees. 'People just bring them to me, and they live with me now' she tells me, 'There are so many orphans in this place'.

I leave Justine's house feeling privileged to have met such a determined, inspirational woman.

Jill Johannsen, Programme Officer

More of Justine and the Nansana group's story in the next issue.

Advantage Africa is supporting five SPAU groups to start income generating enterprises and care for orphans and people living with AIDS. Each group activity costs about £3,000. Please use the donation form overleaf to support projects like these.

Funding News



Staff and friends of the charity World Vision (above) ran the Dublin Marathon for Advantage Africa, and raised a magnificent **£5,000** in sponsorship. Who says charities don't work together?

Susan Dobson, Kathy Symonds and Nicky Gilmore completed the Inca Trail in Peru and returned to the UK talking of a life-changing experience. More lives will be changed with the **£10,000** they raised in sponsorship! Thanks to all their sponsors and matching contributions from Susan's employer, the Royal Bank of Scotland.

Tanya Newton and friends' 'Open Your Garages Sale' in Suffolk raised **£300**. She said: 'The rain fell but we still managed to empty out some real bargains. Not bad for a couple of hours fun and fundraising in a small village'.

Students from schools in Colchester and Luton, raised nearly **£1,200** following lessons on Kenya from Andrew.

British Airways have donated **three free flights** to East Africa on top of the two they awarded us last year.



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.

Charity Number: 1092719 **Company Number:** 4388034

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... and Needs

We will soon be scaling up the feeding programme begun in Obambo Kenya to reach more than 50 orphaned children. A **£15/month** standing order provides a nutritious meal for a child each day.

Our forthcoming annual partners' workshop enables the inspirational people we work with to encourage and learn from each other, returning to their communities with new materials, ideas and vision. **£100** covers costs one participant's costs.

Following grants from a charitable trust and an Oxford College, we are now only **£3,000** short of our target to establish a special unit for disabled children within Kisayani Primary School in Kenya.

I'd Like to Support the Work of Inspirational People in Africa

£1 goes a long way in Africa: •£5 children's books •£15 water containers •£60/month nursery teacher's salary •£1,000 stone water tank

1 I would like to make a regular gift of £ _____ to Advantage Africa every month by standing order (a regular gift is especially valuable as it helps us and our partners to plan ahead) starting on: _____ (date)

Bank/building society name and address:

Account name:

Account number:

Sort code:

Signature:

Date:

Standing order instructions to your bank or building society: Please pay the amount above, starting on the date indicated and on the same day of every month thereafter to: HSBC Bank, 19 Midsummer Place, Milton Keynes, PO Box 1888, Coventry CV3 2WN; sort code 40-33-33; account name Advantage Africa; account number 81549200.

OR: Here's my single gift of £ _____ payable to Advantage Africa.

2 My name, address and postcode:

3 If you are a UK taxpayer, please tick the adjacent box to add 28p to every £1 you donate at no cost to you. I am a UK taxpayer and I would like Advantage Africa to treat this donation or standing order and any future donations as Gift Aid donations. I understand that I must pay an amount of Income or Capital Gains Tax in the relevant tax year equal to any tax reclaimed by Advantage Africa in that period.

4 Send this completed form to: Advantage Africa, Waterside House, Woodley Headland, Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes, MK6 3BY.

Thank you for your generous support!