



## 13 Miles and 13 Million Women

September 17<sup>th</sup> was the day of the Bristol Half Marathon and I was taking part to raise funds for Advantage Africa. With little time for training due to the demands of two young children and a recent house move, I was filled with anxiety about it. I was sure to make a complete fool of myself and drag myself in last alongside those dressed as dinosaurs walking backwards on stilts.

I hadn't exercised for years and as the day approached, I thought of numerous reasons to drop out including lack of sleep, dodgy knees (in both appearance and mechanics) and a low embarrassment threshold. But then I would metaphorically slap myself with the reason why I had agreed to take part in the first place. I was aiming to raise £2,000 towards our work to support women affected by HIV in Uganda.

It didn't actually matter how stupid I looked. What mattered was that I gave it a go. I was doing this because of women like Justine Nalongo who we featured in our last newsletter. Justine is a widow who looks after five orphans in her own home, spending half her day by the roadside sewing to earn enough money to feed and send them to school. She spends the other half making bricks for the poultry house that her single parents' group is building in an effort to work themselves out of poverty. Things that a grandmother like Justine would never have to do here in the UK.

'As long as it's not a baking hot day for the race, I'll manage', I thought. 'A bit of drizzle would be good.' Sure enough, September 17<sup>th</sup> dawned clear and warm with one of those spectacular, breathless blue skies. I appraised the other competitors as we walked to the start area – muscly, with stringy, lean physiques, clutching their water and energy bars with steely-eyed focus. I felt like a wildebeest who'd lumbered into a gazelle-only party.

The start was utter chaos – 10,000 runners jostling to find their right places behind the line. I made my way towards the back and found myself beside a man dressed as Superman. When he saw the three-foot high barrier we had to negotiate to get into the runners' enclosure, he wailed loudly, 'How are we supposed to get over that?'. Disappointing for a superhero.



Finally, we were off. My strategy for completing the 13 miles was to 'power walk' as fast as I could, let gravity help out by running down any hills and make sure I jogged at least 200 steps in every mile. The weather was scorching, and as the miles melted away, ambulances whipped past and competitors slumped semi-conscious by the roadside; I learned later that more than 70 runners collapsed from heat exhaustion.

I eventually completed the half marathon in two hours and fifty minutes. I didn't come last but I did trail behind a man awash with sweat in a rubber ballerina suit and another competitor swaddled in an overcoat with a crocodile tied to his back.

With unsightly blisters and a shiny medal to show for it, I did each of the 13 miles in almost exactly 13 minutes. I did it for women in Uganda like Justine Nalongo and Betty Kizito, whose work we feature overleaf. For any of the 13 million HIV positive women battling for their own and their children's lives across Africa, I'd do it again in the blink of an eye.

**Jane Betts, Co-founder and Trustee**

*Thank you to everyone who sponsored Jane. At the time of writing, she has raised £1,800 (including Gift Aid) of her £2,000 target. You can still sponsor her by going to [www.justgiving.com/janebetts](http://www.justgiving.com/janebetts)*



This sewing workshop helps these women to make a living

# A Partnership to Change Lives in Uganda

**Advantage Africa Programme Officer, Jill Johannsen writes:**

'On these pages, I would like to introduce you to the Single Parents' Association of Uganda (SPAU) and one of their seven projects that Advantage Africa is supporting, in a village called Muzinda.

The five-strong SPAU co-ordinating team are totally committed to improving the lives of single parents living in poverty and isolation. They are skilled at mobilising people to develop their communities by planning, running and reporting on projects. They often send thanks and greetings to our supporters.

Most of SPAU's members are HIV positive and many, like Betty Kizito in Muzinda, are also responsible for looking after children orphaned by AIDS as well as their own kids. The 20 orphans in Betty's care previously slept together on the floor without even blankets to keep them warm. With the support of Advantage Africa and SPAU, these children in Muzinda now have a healthy home that has, quite simply, transformed their lives.'

## Foster Mother Betty Kizito speaks out:

'This 30<sup>th</sup> August is a joyous day. When we began this work, we were apprehensive. We didn't know that we would go far and some said the task was impossible. Now everyone knows that when you start something good, God has plans for it too.

I thank God that there are people in this world with generous hearts like those in this village who shared the little they had with us to feed these children. And I'm lost for words to describe the work that SPAU and Advantage Africa has done here. I pray that God keeps all of us together as a team.'

## SPAU Director Paul Lwanga is interviewed:

**Paul, how did you spend this afternoon?**

'Today is August 30<sup>th</sup> 2006, and we were in Muzinda and saw the occupants into the new completed house...Betty and 20 orphaned children.'

**What words did you have for them?**

'Very few words because we are all so happy but I gave a talk to the children about their responsibility to keep the new house neat and tidy always.'

**What keeps you going in your role as Director?**

'I am thankful when we get things done like this. I am thankful for our partnership with Advantage Africa.'

**And your thoughts on poverty?**

'Sometimes I read shaming news. Like all our MPs asking for expensive four-wheel drive vehicles while they represent people who can't afford to send their children to school or buy their next meal. That makes me angry. Then I read that no African representative spoke at the International AIDS Conference in Toronto last month but non-Africans were nominated to speak on behalf of Africa. That makes people think that Africa has no people fighting against HIV/AIDS - I just wish that they could see what we are doing here!'

**The Four Week Countdown to**

**4** Windows and doors fitted **3** Plaster inside and out **1** Furnishing done **0**



This is my mattress!



The beds arrive in Muzinda



Unloading o



No more sleeping on the floor



**To reach more orphans in Muzinda and other Uganda**

Jerry-cans for £1; bags of cement for £5; bed sheets for £11; vehicle fuel for 60p per litre; labour for £3 per d

## ... a new life for 20 orphans ...

... ering completed 2 Painting finished  
Betty and 20 children move in.



Lawrence



... cement. The children's old house is in the background.



Finally, the new home is finished

## ... dan villages SPAU needs to buy:

... r £6; mosquito nets for £8; blankets  
... ay; a whole new home for £5,000!

## The children get involved and give their reaction:

The older children in Betty's care were keen to get involved in building their new home; they quickly took responsibility for preparing meals for the builders and fetching the water and materials they needed.

5 year-old Machu felt so happy and special to have simple things that we take for granted when she moved into her new home. For the first time in her life, she had a bed, sheets, blanket, pillow and a jerrycan and basin with which to wash herself. This little girl's ability to think of others became a true inspiration to the adults involved in the project: 'Where are you going to sleep? Everyone has got a bed now except you!' she kept asking SPAU's Project Officer Zack.

Eri, 8, said 'I was very happy because of the new house because we [girls] shall have a room of our own'. With so much more space, Eri is no longer at risk from the respiratory and skin diseases that beset the children when they were living in the cramped conditions of their old house. They are also protected from malaria by new mosquito nets.

Bob, 12, said 'This new house is going to be quite a good one because it has a shed, where we can play... we thank you very much for this work'.

## The two Johns have their say:

Local builders John Nyombi and John Sentongo were in charge of all the construction. The SPAU team and local community were pleased with their work, their economic use of materials, their low labour charges and the way they saw the project through to the end.

John Sentongo said 'There were plants growing inside the foundations when we started. We are grateful to SPAU and Betty for putting their trust in us and also giving us the opportunity to work for this noble cause'.

## SPAU Project Officer, Zack Lwanga reports:

'The partnership we have with Advantage Africa aims to enable five of our SPAU member groups, that's about 200 single parents, to care for orphans, become financially self-reliant and enable their children to receive a good quality education. The work in Muzinda has helped all the orphans in Betty's care find a ray of hope shining in their lives as far as shelter, one of the basic needs of life, is concerned. The only word I can use to describe the children's reaction to their new home is euphoria.

Our work in Muzinda is far from over though. Lawrence Segujja, 4, is an orphan who likes to spend his time at Betty's place and helped clean the new house. On 30<sup>th</sup> August, when his playmates began living there, Lawrence wore the biggest smile. But in spite of his happiness for them, Lawrence neither slept in the new home nor became the proud owner of a new set of personal effects. At night, when Betty's home is full to capacity, Lawrence sleeps at the house of another single parent and SPAU member, Juliet Namirimu.

Lawrence provides us with a new challenge: to help the other community members like Juliet who care for many more orphans like him. We have planned for that. Now, we just need to be constant in our vision'.

## SPAU Social Worker Sarah Nakizza talks of the future:

'We know that some of the children Betty cares for were born with the virus and I am working with her to make sure that their nutrition is good. We have started with the 20 children in Betty's care but our plan is to provide household kits for other orphans in the village.

Betty and all 37 members of the Muzinda SPAU group are HIV positive and we want to help them to get health checks, access antiretroviral drugs, start a prevention programme among the young people and earn a decent living. Once I have been trained in how to do it, we plan to help them create memory books so that they can prepare themselves for the future.'

## Funding News



Not bad eh? Two hours, thirteen minutes, one second and £550 for our projects in Uganda. And just look at this lovely medal I got!

Jane Betts was not the only person in the **Bristol Half Marathon** running for Advantage Africa. Programme Officer Jill Johannsen (pictured), Trustee Chris Harvey and staff from Andrews Estate Agents also took part, each raising hundred of pounds. Jill said: 'It was a wonderful, enjoyable day and the crowd was fantastic. It felt great to reach the finish and I'd like to thank everyone who sponsored me, Jane and Chris'.

Inspired by all this? Then why not enter the world's biggest marathon, the **Flora London Marathon**? Since the London Marathon began, half a million runners have raised over £200 million for charity. Advantage Africa has one place for April 2007 and we are looking for a special person who can train for the event and fundraise as much as they can for our projects; please contact us or go to the website if you are the one!

## ... and Needs

As our HIV/AIDS work grows, we are seeking funds to ensure more orphans in Muzinda, Uganda are well-housed and cared for and that the orphan feeding programme in Obambo, Kenya is sustained. We also need £8,000 for a new project using sport and a library to raise awareness of HIV among young people in Kaluluni, Kenya.



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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Is there clutter in your attic or garage that you've been meaning to throw out? You can now raise funds for our work by selling your unwanted items on eBay. Simply select the option to donate a proportion of proceeds to charity and then select Advantage Africa when entering your listing.

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

•£5: a diagnostic test for HIV treatment •£15/month: a daily nutritious meal for an orphaned child •£30/month: home-based care for a widow living with HIV •£60/month: a salary for a community worker •£1,000: a simple kitchen for an orphan feeding programme

**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 box below 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.

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Thank you for your generous support!