

Joy for children and communities

Hello St. John's,

Thank you so much for the support you have given us over the last year. Your support, both in prayer and financial, has allowed us to grow and develop the project and means a lot to us and the people we support.

We run a community outreach project in 4 slums in Kampala, Uganda. We now work around 70 families who have a child with a disability. In Uganda, it is seen as a curse or an embarrassment to have a child with a disability. When we first started the project 4 years ago, the children were often locked away in homes. Neighbours didn't even know they were there, and it took our project worker a long time to find families. Word got out and many families have now come forward and they are developing a community together.

Our project worker visits the families every 2 weeks. She takes sensory toys, books and plays games with the children. She shows the parents how to do basic physiotherapy exercises and gives them advice on how to position children, what to feed them and how to take care of them. She also counsels the parents and prays with the family and is there to give encouragement and support.

There is a lot of stigma surrounding disability, so our project worker also raises awareness of disability within the slums. She meets with groups of neighbours to answer their questions and to talk to them about disability. From this, neighbours have started to support the families, even offering to help take care of the children which allows the parents to work to support the families.

We provide health insurance for the children. If they have a cough, a cold or malaria they can go to a medical centre and get treatment. This costs just £10 for a child to have treatment and all the parents are grateful as they have no money for the medication when their children get sick.

Each quarter we have a Community Outreach Day. Parents come together to hear inspirational and encouraging talks as well as receive access to important medical care. They are able to see a Nurse, Doctor, physiotherapist and occupational therapist for free. The children all play games together and the parents support each other. We also invite a local pastor to speak to the parents and to pray with them.

We have seen the parents come so far in 4 years, they all had no hope when the project started but now they have been visited regularly they understand that they are loved and that their children are loved.

We are currently training the parents in business skills and we hope to be able to start providing the parents with small loans (£30). They will be expected to pay the loan back to Joy for Children and then this loan will go back out to another family to support them. This way parents can start to provide for their children, pay for equipment they need and the extra health care they need.

Last year when we visited Uganda we were invited to go and meet a group of parents in one of the slum areas. They had set up their own group, to encourage each other and to support each other with business loans. The group also prayed together and encouraged one another. There were 31 parents in the group. This was amazing to see that they had all got together and set up the groups themselves.

Recently we have seen more fathers coming back into the families to help the parents. Lynda has done a lot of work with the families and we currently have 3 fathers who are now involved in caring for their children. We are working with the parents on ways which we can encourage the fathers within the group.

We are always looking for more regular givers, without our amazing supporters this project could not happen. If you are interested in giving monthly or have any more questions about the project please do let me know.

Thank you!

Harriet and Paul Lunnemann