

A LETTER FROM A SPONSORED STUDENT

Read a letter from Agnes, Mtaala's first sponsored student and our first secondary school graduate. P2

SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENTS & A SPONSOR'S STORY

Meet one of our students in Uganda and read a letter from one of our sponsors. P3

KIDS THESE DAYS!

Find out how students in the U.S are improving the lives of our students in Uganda. P4

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Earth Walk, U.S., connects kids in Uganda with computers. P6

AWEGYS: THEN AND NOW

See the transformation of Awegys School! P7

THE POWER OF WORDS COMES TO KIGO, UGANDA

It was 2:00 p.m. on a Wednesday afternoon in August. Silence and red dust hung in the air. Students leaned over their wooden desks, pencils in hand, etching out solutions to mathematical problems in their grey ledger books.

The grind of a truck carrying a large load edged up the pothole-ridden dirt road toward Awegys Secondary School. Students looked at one another and then glanced at their teacher, who nodded. Books shut. Pencils clattered to desk tops. The students dashed out the classroom door to the school gate. Their library had arrived.

Swinging in toward the compound, the school's gates revealed a metal shipping container, battered, scratched, and worn. Three hours later, the container was in place on the school grounds, but there was much work to be done before furniture and books could move in. [Continued on page 5](#)

THE PLAY'S THE THING

Under the direction of visiting theater professor, Mariah Reed Johnson, and musician and set designer, Brie von Hausch, Awegys students wrote, directed, and performed in an original musical throughout the summer and fall of 2010. The play, *Journey to Mtaala*, deftly weaves together stories from the students' lives in an inspiring and heartbreaking tale.

Along the way, audience members learn about life as a child soldier in Northern Uganda, or about a young girl working at petty trade, trying to earn enough money to attend school. We learn about a family whose mother is murdered in the bush, and about the crushing AIDS epidemic. But most importantly, we learn about the resilience and vision of our students as they sing "Victory in Education."

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Awegys students read on the veranda of their new library that was built from a shipping container and houses a wide variety of books for the school, the children, and families of Kigo village.

A DREAM REALIZED

In December 2010, Agnes Seera became one of the first graduates of Mtaala Foundation's partner school, Awegys Christian Comprehensive Secondary School in Kigo, Uganda. Graduating from secondary school was Agnes's dream, and it was also the dream of the founder of Awegys School, Alice Wegoye. It was orphans of little means but with big dreams that prompted Alice to turn her home and land into a school for vulnerable children several years ago. Mtaala Foundation is now seeking a government scholarship so that Agnes can go on to attend a tertiary institution. In the meantime, read a letter from Agnes on page 2.



MEET MTAALA'S FIRST SCHOOL GRADUATE

AN OPEN LETTER FROM A SPONSORED STUDENT

I'm Agnes Seera by name. I would love to share with you the importance of sponsorship. I'm a Mtaala sponsored student and I know what it has fetched for me. Before I got a sponsor, my plan was to drop out of school in senior four instead of continuing until senior six. This was not my own wish but it was due to money scarcity. Since my primary school, school requirements were a problem to me despite the fact that I was in a government school where less requirements were needed.

I joined secondary at Awegys Senior School with the support of madam Alice Wegoye the founder of the school. She is a very good lady who favored me and made me pay very little money. I got surprised when I heard that I had got a sponsor. This was unbelievable because no one had ever got a sponsor in the whole school by then. I was the first student to get a sponsor. This made me very happy. Sponsorship has connected me to the outside world, it has paid my school fees throughout high school and got me other requirements such as clothes, shoes, bed sheets, bag and many others.

I'm now in senior six preparing for my final exams. This is my last year to complete secondary school but I pray that my sponsorship continues such that I fully reach my goals. On top of that, I want to work at my best so that I also join a tertiary institution one day, if possible.

Sometimes I sit down and ask myself the following questions. If it wasn't for sponsorship, where will I have been by now? If I am meant to work, who would employ me because by then I was below 18 years and did not have any qualifications. However, I am now having hope for a bright future, thanks to Mtaala foundation.

I much yearn for my goals such that I can also sponsor one student at least. This will be my appreciation and I pray that God helps me achieve that. This is one of my first plans.

I also pray that God blesses whoever is striving hard to see that we Ugandan orphans start seeing light in our future. Even those who are willing but cannot afford, I pray that one day, you make it.

To talk about sponsorship, I may not end, so let me force myself to stop here leaving you in the hands of Lord the almighty. Thank you for reading.

Sincerely,

Agnes Seera

**Agnes Seera
performs a scene
from a play
*Journey to
Mtaala* written by
Awegys students.**



THE BOYS' DORMITORY GETS A SOLAR PANEL: EACH BOY'S ROOM NOW HAS A LIGHT BULB!



LITERACY, GIRLS, AND LEARNING IN UGANDA

English is the official language of Uganda. Only children who attend school learn to read, write, and speak English—but many children do not have the necessary funds to attend school.

Lack of education was listed as one of the largest causes of poverty in Ugandan households because it leads to reduced income generating opportunities, particularly for women who have higher rates of illiteracy than men (GoU, 1999, Qtd. by Deobrah Kasente).

Due to the fact that Ugandan girls are more often denied the opportunity to attend school than are boys, Awegys Secondary School enrolls two female students for every male student.

SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENTS



NAME: Milly
AGE: Fourteen
GRADE: Primary Seven

ABOUT GLORIA: Milly's father passed away and her mother abandoned her, leaving her with her grandmother. Her grandmother sells greens in the market but is struggling to pay for Milly's school fees. She cannot afford secondary education for her because it is more expensive. Milly enjoys netball. "Please help me to complete my education."

FAVORITE SUBJECT: English

DREAMS OF: She wishes to one day become a nurse.

To become a sponsor, visit us online at www.mtaala.org.

A SPONSOR'S PERSPECTIVE MAKING CONNECTIONS ACROSS CONTINENTS

Mother Theresa said, "If you cannot feed one hundred people, then feed just one." The thought of the weight of the world, of even enacting some small change in your brief period in the world, can seem overwhelming, often paralyzing. Yet I was raised to "be the change," and was searching for where that change should start.

Along came Brenda.

Brenda is a student at Awegys whom I have had the pleasure of not only sponsoring (along with two of my friends) for the past three years, but also meeting in person last summer. I am constantly inspired by Brenda and her life. An orphan who lost her parents to HIV at a young age, Brenda was raised by different family members over the years. She did not need sponsorship until her extended family could no longer support her studies, and she insisted that she continue her education rather than being married off at a young age. When I met Brenda last summer, we spent a day together in which we shared stories of our life, questions about each others' cultures, and of course, shopping.

When I was Brenda's age, I wanted my shopping trips to end with new cds, shoes, and even more clothes. Brenda asked that we buy her things like sheets for her dorm bed, notebooks for school, and pencils (although, like many girls, she still enjoys sparkles and nice-smelling toiletries!). She was and is unbelievably polite, gracious, interested, and hard-working.

I am incredibly grateful to have Brenda in my life. She has taught me that, if you feel you cannot feed one hundred, feed just one-- who may then go out into the world, and be able to feed one hundred herself.



Upon meeting her sponsor Alison for the first time, Brenda presents Alison with several gifts, including an original drawing and a handmade basket.

SPOTLIGHT ON U.S. STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

Tucked away in the town of Cherry Hill, New Jersey, is Rosa International Middle School, an IB MYP school filled with students working to make a difference in their own neighborhood—and in the neighborhood of Kigo, Uganda. What is most remarkable about the students you will read about here, is not that they were asked to help: rather, all of these students came forward and **asked** if they *could* help. Kids these days!



Josh, a seventh grader with a passion for sports, organized a fundraiser to raise money and awareness when he learned that the students at Awegys did not have sports equipment. In the words of an Awegys student, “Now we feel like professionals”—thanks to Josh.

The boys’ dorm at Awegys School is not located on the main campus—so when the latrine (bathroom that is a deep hole in the ground surrounded by a cement wall) at the boys’ dorm collapsed, the male students had to walk to the main campus anytime of day or night just to use the latrine. But seventh grader Zach donated the gifts received for his Bar Mitzvah so that a new latrine could be built for the boys’ dorm. It seems like a simple thing, but the new latrine has improved the students’ quality of life.



Seventh graders, Lily and Emily, donated to Awegys library fund, and in honor of their efforts, two bookshelves in the library proudly display donor plaques with the girls’ names.



Stars Over Africa, a middle school variety show, was created by Rosa International 6th grader Catie, as a fun and meaningful way for students to express their creativity while raising funds to improve Awegys School. Not long after Catie presented her idea for the show, Drew, also a sixth grader at the time, stepped into a leadership role, and in the three ensuing years those two students along with a cadre of inspiring kids have helped install a well and a library at the school. This third year, the students helped purchase science equipment for Awegys School.

High School Seniors Who Make a Difference

While most seniors are consumed with getting into college, students at Cherry Hill East High School in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, are not only concerned about their future—they are also improving the lives of students 8,000 miles away in Kigo, Uganda.

- Jordan reached out to his Student Government Association and asked them to support Mtaala’s quest to purchase science equipment for Awegys School. His activism and East’s support helped Mtaala to reach its fundraising goal. Now Awegys will be able to offer an improved science program to the many students who wish to pursue careers in health and engineering.
- Taylor, Mtaala’s 2009 Volunteer of the Year, went beyond sponsoring an Awegys student this year when she donated enough to fund our Porridge and Greens program which provides our students with porridge for breakfast and greens every other day.



The students formed a bucket brigade and passed buckets brimming with water from the “Well of Living Water” that stands next to the library.



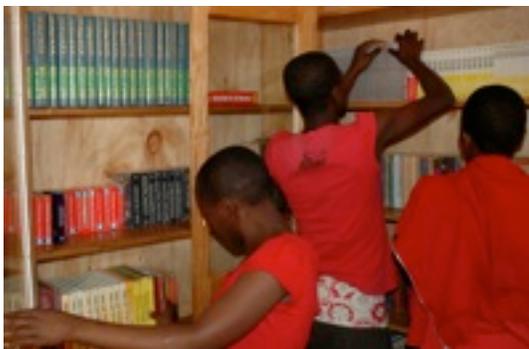
Then, students swept and scrubbed the container inside and out to prepare it for painting.



Once the roof was on, the container was painted inside and out.



Students eagerly unloaded bookcases from the truck and carried them into their new library.



With the shelves in place, Awegys students unpacked the boxes of donated books.



Jimmy, an Awegys student, inventoried and stamped all the books with the proud words, “Awegys School.”



Local village children gather water from the school's well—the only source of clean water in the area.

The
Power
of
Words
Comes
to
Kigo,
Uganda

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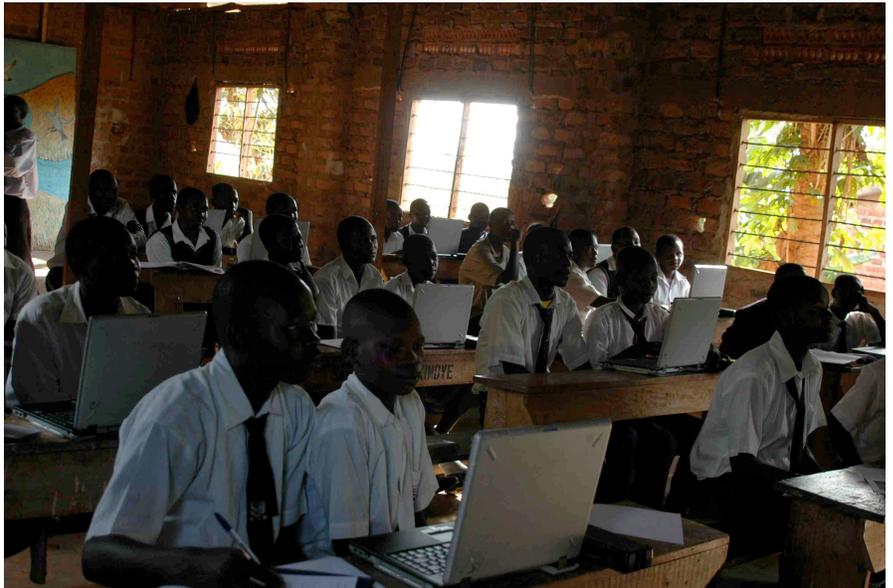


Finally, Awegys students read to the local children, nourishing their hearts and minds through the power of words.

CONNECTING STUDENTS WITH THE WORLD

In 2005, there were eight computers for every one million people in Uganda. In that same year in the United States, there were almost 800,000 computers for every one million Americans. In 2007, three of every one hundred Ugandans were internet users. And in the United States, seventy three of every one hundred Americans regularly used the internet. Considering the technologically-rich world in which we live today, proficiency in technology is essential to a successful future.

Education is also essential to a successful future for all of us, and in pursuit of that goal, the Mtaala Foundation recently received sixteen laptops for the student at Awegys, our partner school, to share in the classroom. Donated by Earth Walk, a consultancy which integrates technology in classrooms, the computers give Awegys students the chance to learn career skills like word processing. For most of our students, this is their first experience with computers. Upon receiving the laptops, students quickly huddled around the glowing screens, taking turns learning how to use the mouse, type, and format academic papers and career resources. Thank you, Earth Walk!



U.S. volunteers, Jessica and Tami, teach a word processing class to Awegys students. Knowledge of computers and word processing gives our student an edge in terms of future employment.

THE PLAY'S THE THING... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Besides allowing the students to practice writing and working together, the play fostered their creativity and allowed even the shyest student to sing, perform, and come into his or her own on stage and behind the scenes. The process of writing and performing the play gave students the opportunity to face and share their pasts, which often included disease, war, and losing family.

The play's finale was a song written and performed by the students thanking Awegys, Mtaala, and their sponsors for the opportunity to do well in the world--and the song expresses their hope and determination through the words, "We Are the Younger Generation."



AWEGYS SECONDARY SCHOOL: THEN & NOW



Five years ago, Alice Wegoye, a retired Ugandan school teacher and administrator, gave up her humble home and land and turned it into a secondary school for vulnerable children, including: AIDS orphans, and impoverished and war affected youth. The photo on the left shows students moving bricks for the construction of their school in the village of Kigo, Uganda, a village that--until Alice's sacrifice, did not have a secondary school.

With Alice's determination and the help of Mtaala Foundation, eventually a roof was installed on the classroom blocks, as shown in the photo on the right.



A grant from a U.S. foundation provided for the plastering of the main classroom block inside and out during the spring of 2011. A donation from another supporter provided much needed doors and windows for the classrooms--in addition to fire extinguishers. Although the school has a few light bulbs powered by solar panels, the real fire threat comes from the fact that all cooking occurs over an open charcoal fire. Students in the school's environmental club, "The Green Stars," planted shrubs around the perimeter of the school's courtyard.



Holding books from the school's new library, the students send a big thank you for the library!

THIS YEAR **AND** BEYOND

As an ambitious and ever-growing small organization, we love it when our supporters lend a helping hand towards Mtaala projects. The following are a few of our goals for this year...and beyond!

THIS YEAR WE WILL...

BUILD A SCHOOL CLINIC In order to provide quality and accessible healthcare for our students, the Mtaala Foundation is working to build, stock, and staff a health clinic on Awegys School grounds. The clinic will help prevent and treat the many health threats that our students face, such as malaria, worms, and the flu.

IMPROVE THE SCHOOL'S SCIENCE CURRICULUM By equipping the school with necessary books, laboratory equipment, and reagents, we will enable our students to build the necessary foundation to pursue their science-based dreams later in high school and beyond.

DESKS FOR ALL Our students are in desperate need of desks. Since the school opened, Awegys has been using desks borrowed from the primary school. In addition to creating a better learning environment, desks would classify Awegys as a National Exam Center so our students could take their national exams at the school. One desk for three students averages \$40.00. Please consider providing a desk for three students.

HELP MAKE IT HAPPEN

THIS YEAR WE WILL ALSO...

RAISE FUNDS TO BUILD A SINGLE SCHOOL STRUCTURE SEVERAL STORIES HIGH Originally built on a small piece of land donated by Awegys founder Alice Wegoye, Awegys School is in need of new land that will allow us to create the building and infrastructure that helps any school run smoothly. Until we are able to purchase new land, we plan to maximize use of the land we have by creating a new building several stories high that would house classrooms and a dormitory. This would require demolishing the current girls' dormitory--Alice's former humble home--but would result in Mtaala being able to help more students in an improved facility.

ONGOING PROJECTS INCLUDE...

SECURING STUDENT SPONSORS Mtaala's greatest need is sponsors for students. For a small monthly fee, sponsors provide tuition and room and board for our students. Our sponsors are the heart of our program.

A NEW KITCHEN All meals are currently prepared in a large vat over an open fire. A new kitchen would provide adequate rain protection and ventilation while improving safety, efficiency and the quality of meals.

FUNDING SOLAR POWER In the twenty-first century, electricity has become a necessity for quality growth to occur. Solar power would not only provide reliable electricity to improve classroom learning and general quality of life, it would also follow our dedication to environmental and financial sustainability.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THESE PROJECTS OR MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE MTAALA FOUNDATION, VISIT WWW.MTAALA.ORG.

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OUR MISSION

The Mtaala Foundation creates and supports education communities for vulnerable children and at-risk youth, including those affected by poverty, war, and HIV/AIDS. Empowering youth through learning and giving back to their community is a central tenet of our work.

The foundation partners with individuals and villages to create secondary schools where none exist, and connects the schools' students with international sponsors to fund their educations.

LEARN MORE AT
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