

The Mityana The Mityana Charity

Charity no 1064825

Issue 10 - December 2005

Notes from the Chairman and Secretary:

The past year has been one of huge prominence for both the charity and us Nigel and Sarah personally. Ann Potts first went to Mityana in March 2004 and has since then immersed herself in working for the Lord both here and in Mityana. She has given herself unstintingly in raising awareness of the needs of the people in Mityana. In February 2005 Karla and Abby Weir went out to Uganda and were so inspired that the whole family went later in the year to find out how they could improve medical facilities in Mityana. The charity has gone from strength to strength since Ann and Karla have become actively involved in their respective projects!

We both visited Mityana ourselves for the first time this year and were overwhelmed with the welcome we received in a country where so many are so poor. It has made us even more determined to even out the difference between the "haves" and the "have-nots". We look forward to a time when there is universal clean water so that children do not die of typhoid and all can get an education.

We have also been very uplifted by the support and prayer of many friends in Mityana and here for Nigel's ongoing health problem. Many in Uganda might be materially poor but certainly not in their ability to pray!

UK COMMITTEE -

Honorary Patron	Derek Burden
Chairman	Nigel Birch
Secretary	Sarah Birch
Treasurer	Janice Knox
Mission/HomeGroups	Ann Potts
Membership	Julie Rees
Health Visitors	Karla & Gordon Weir
St Sebastian's Rep.	Sue Williams
Wooburn Rep.	Roz Chandler
Newsletter	Clive Smith
Web Site Coordinator	Gary Alexander
Members	- John & Margaret Stainsby - Kathy Pinto

As a charity we started small by helping the many orphan children in Mityana to be educated through the sponsorship scheme. So many children have been able to change their lives and find a purpose with some children moving to secondary level. In Uganda education is valued highly because the children want to learn and better themselves; unfortunately education in the UK is taken for granted with large numbers of children and adults who have little interest in being educated. The charity recently began to sponsor teachers so they are paid more regularly and we continue to raise funds for school building projects.

For further information about The Mityana Charity please contact The Secretary, Mityana Charity, c/o 6 Tangleby Drive, Wokingham, Berks. RG42 2NY. Phone: 0118 9790097. Email: sn.birch@ukonline.co.uk or visit our web site at <http://www.Mityanacharity.org.uk>

The charity has now grown hugely over the last few years especially working with the Mityana Diocese and the local community to improve health care, train clergy and develop Lwankuba Farm and Nabukenya school. To extend our health care activities for all we need to modify our constitution to include adults as well as children. Details of these proposed changes are listed later in the newsletter. These changes will be proposed and voted on at the next AGM in May 2006.

In this newsletter you will read about the personal experiences of those who have visited Mityana and how individuals have come home with great enthusiasm for the people of Mityana and for what the Lord is doing in this community. Many have become actively involved with the work done, promoted ideas for fund raising and new projects have evolved. It is always a great blessing for those involved with the charity and those who have visited Mityana as their experiences have strengthened their faith and encouraged others in a Mission ministry. Attitudes and perceptions are changed! Visitors return home with a better appreciation and

understanding of how the people of Mityana live and are constantly reminded by our own lives in the UK which we accept as "normal" in a prosperous and wealthy nation. We should all be doing more for the most needy of God's people. Our vicar at St Sebastian's, Andrew Marsden, will be visiting Mityana for his first experience in March 2006.

UGANDAN COMMITTEE -

John Mossassiza (Chairman)
Grace Mossassiza
Stephen Bagunwa
Victoria & Stephen Lukwago
Moses Ssemugooma
Margaret Serumkuma

So I urge you to continue to support the Mityana Charity whether it be by your time or money or ideas. Please speak to a committee member if you want to get more involved.

Nigel & Sarah Birch

THE BENEFITS OF THE MITYANA CHARITY TO UGANDAN'S.

Mityana charity has gone a long way to assist in the education of young boys and girls who would have otherwise not been able to attend school. This is because many are victims of AIDS where they have lost parents. Others have poor parents who can't afford to pay for their fees. So, through the charity many who had no hope in life have found hope. This is very true because I am one of those who have found hope through the charity.

I came from a poor family but God fearing. My parents were unable to meet all the school requirements for primary education but the charity picked me and it is from this background that I am what I am now. I later went through secondary education and now I am a prospectus candidate for the clergy to be ordained on 11th December this year.

Mityana charity has also in the recent past sent us many people who have assisted Christians spiritually. This has been done through evangelism in churches and also teaching about formation of small cell groups which have helped individuals to glow spiritually.



Alongside spiritual matters they have also helped in the building of clinics to bring medical services nearer to people and a good number of medical workers have been trained to work in this clinic.

It is really difficult for me to mention all the good things done by the charity. But only to say God bless the charity as they endeavor to help Mityana in various ways. I call upon all those willing to join hands with Mityana charity to offer

charitable services. In a nutshell, I just want to say it is difficult to mention all the people involved but long live charity members.

Moses Ssemugooma
Health Coordinator Mityana Charity

Watch this space!!!

Exciting and evocative new CD in production.

The Youth Choirs of Busimbí and Katakala Church, Mityana are to bring the spirit of Africa and the joy of their faith into your living room.

Not to be missed in your CD collection. Due for release summer/autumn 2006.

Pray for a possible youth exchange with some of the choir members.

YOUTH TRIP 2006

There will be 9 youth and 15 adults travelling to Mityana on 12th February for 8 days with a view to building and painting. The plan at present is to paint the interior of 2 local and needy primary schools in Mityana and to finish staff quarters at a rural Health Clinic. At present the staff and their families are sleeping in an inadequate

Health Clinic building. Fundraising for the trip and its projects is ongoing at the moment.

If you would like to make a donation towards the Youth Trip please either speak to Drs Gordon/Karla Weir or Jean Ajin. Alternatively send a gift to Mityana Charity marked Youth Trip. This can be sent to the treasurer, Janice Knox at 47 Penn Road, Datchet, Slough, Berkshire SL3 9HS.

We will be selling **Christmas Cards**, running a series of Fundraising Dinner parties, Cake Sales, collecting loose change, art commissions, Bag Packing at Asda, Jumble Sale (New Year), sponsored slims and generally being very busy as a group in the coming months so that we can achieve as much as possible for Mityana when we go.

We look forward to providing you a sparky, youthful report with a difference when we get back. We also hope to give Power Point presentations to groups and churches to share what we have done and seen so please contact the Charity for more details.

Making a Difference!

On June 26th 2005, 10 adults and 19 youth took to the Carnival Pool in Wokingham to raise money to support Health in Mityana.

The group swam a total of 34 miles and had a really enjoyable time. The total raised with Gift Aid was a stunning £3882.12.

Thanks to the Carnival Pool and St Sebastian's Youth for their enthusiastic support.



Mityana.

As a result of this 89 people are currently training in Uganda as Birth Assistants, Laboratory Assistants or Veterinary Assistants.

In addition, it is planned that each Health Clinic will be presented with an essential textbook "Where There is No Doctor"

Another clear example of a small amount of money from numerous sponsors making an enormous difference in

Look out for the Mityana Sponsored Swim 2006!

A 'Thank You' Note from Herbert.....

I thank the Lord for the charity and my prayer is that God blesses each and every member. The blessing also extends to non-charity members.

Really the charity is a miracle to me in that had it not been formed, I don't know where I would be now. I grew up with my grand mum until 1995 when she passed away. I was brought to Mityana in 1996 to look after my dad's cows and I had no future in education. In 1997 I met Jean and it was the turning point in my life. I think she felt bad to see that all were going to school and it was only me that was staying at home.

She asked me if I wanted to go to school and I said yes so she gave me a book to read to her. I read and I came across a word I could not read and that word was sigh. She gave me the proper pronunciation. Then she got me a sponsor and I started school.

I thank the Lord that I finished my senior six. Unfortunately my sponsor could not sponsor me further as she had financial problems. During senior four my parents denied me and they chased me away from home. I lived a hard life but the charity stood with me and has stood with me up to now.

Jean helped me to start a shoe polishing business which helped me to survive until it was destroyed by fire.

The charity members have taken me as a son and I thank the Lord that you provided love and every thing I was supposed to get from my parents.

In Mityana, after being sent away from home, I lived with friends but you stood with me. I was clothed, loved and you really communicated with me which I love most. Thank you. The charity helped me to record music - the first song which is about to be aired very soon

The charity also helped my sister Margaret Namagembe to get back to school and now she is going to sit for senior six exams.

In Mityana life is somehow hard as you can fail to get food and some days there is no permanent home for me and lack of parental love, but all in all, the Lord will see me through. I help the charity to make sure that all sponsored students get the school fees paid and also being assisted as long as the money sent for them can help. I love my young mates and I want them to use their chances.

All in all the charity has been my parents, mentor and my provider. I can't write all but thank you.

Where would I be if there was no England?

I wouldn't be successful to this extent if Jean Ashfield wasn't there

I wouldn't be educated if Mrs Dwane wasn't there

I thank the Lord for St Sebastian's Church and School for what they are doing for us

*Holy God bless Jean
Bless the people of England
Give them joy and mighty happiness in all they do
I was in darkness and you lighten my life
You gave me the assistance that my fellow countrymen had failed to give me
My country ignored me but England loved me so much
For you provided everything to me that my country failed to do*

[only one verse of a much longer song sung to us at The Enro Hotel on the Saturday evening]

God bless you so much
With love Herbert

MITYANA CHARITY

Reg.Charity No: 1064825

NABUKENYA PRIMARY SCHOOL & WRANKUBA FARM,

Mityana, Uganda

A SCHOOL WITH NO RESOURCES AND A FARM THAT HAS NO FOOD

- A 500 Acre farm, (18 miles from Mityana Town) is virtually uncultivated, and belongs To the Diocese of Mityana.
- They have no money to cultivate it
- The only resources are one broken tractor, One hoe, a small church and a few simple buildings.
- A school was opened on the site in April 2005 named "Nabukenya Primary School" after the Ugandan name given to Ann Potts. They now have nearly 100 pupils, but urgently need resources, such as class-rooms, blackboards, books and teachers salaries.



THE VISION

- To get the farm fully productive and develop Nabukenya Primary School

- To establish a centre where local subsistence farmers can be trained in improved agricultural methods
- To encourage animal ploughing and other co-operative ventures
- To develop facilities for the local community, and perhaps eventually establish a Centre for Justice & Peace where young people from Britain and Uganda can come together

However, I am pleased to say that kind people have already pitched in to help. I would mention in particular Blucher House, Wellington College, which has adopted the School, the Berkshire Third Order Franciscans and Holy Trinity Sunday School, Bracknell. With the help of Wellington College I have now been able to order toilets which are currently under construction, and Holy Trinity Sunday School had a wonderful Harvest Festival collection of writing materials and lots of other “goodies” for me to take to the children.



THE NEED IS ENORMOUS

- There are approx 55,000 AIDS orphans in the Mityana Area
- A high percentage of children are malnourished
- 51% of the population have no access to medical care
- 73% of population are subsistence farmers completely reliant on what they can grow
- Life expectancy is 42 years

**A BIRTHDAY GIFT FOR THE
FOLK WHO HAVE EVERYTHING!**

*Buy an animal for Mityana
and get a*

SIGNED CERTIFICATE
TO PRESENT TO FRIENDS & FAMILY

£2 BUYS A HEN, £5 COCKEREL, £7 PIG,
£35 YOUNG OXEN, £122 HEIFER, £2 HAND HOE

COULD YOU PAY FOR AN OX OR HELP WITH SCHOOL COSTS?

1) THE OXEN SCHEME:

(AIM: TO IMPROVE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN THE AREA BY THE INTRODUCTION OF OXEN FOR DRAFT PLOUGHING AND CULTIVATION, AND A CENTRE FOR TRAINING LOCAL SUBSISTENCE FARMERS)

*£300 WILL BUY ONE PAIR OF DRAFT OXEN,
ONE SINGLE FURROW PLOUGH
AND PAY FOR INITIAL VETERINARY SERVICES*

2) URGENTLY NEEDED RESOURCES FOR THE SCHOOL:

<i>Class-room (3 required)</i>	<i>£4000</i>
<i>Water Tank</i>	<i>£500</i>
<i>Teachers' pay; (cost of 1 teacher for 1 year)</i>	<i>£300</i>
<i>Desks</i>	<i>£7</i>
<i>Porridge Pot (initial cost)</i>	<i>£150</i>

Ann Potts works in Mityana for several months each year and the primary school is called Nabukenya in her honour.

- PLEASE CAN YOU HELP?

Cheques payable to "MITYANA UK CHARITY" should be sent to:

Ann Potts, 39 Larkwood Drive,
Crowthorne, Berks.,
Tel: 01344.773549. e-mail
ann.potts@virgin.net

*(every penny received will be spent on
the Farm and School)*



Sponsorship Fees 2005

Please would all members note that sponsorship fees are now £80 for a primary child and £155 for a secondary student.

We now have children who have been sponsored leaving school at the end of A level equivalents. We will monitor to see what they continue to do now. Obviously those who are capable of further education will still need continued support.

We are delighted that the Hilden Trust has given us another £2,000 to help support teachers at the orphanage. Obviously this doesn't cover all their salaries so we are looking for individual / group sponsorship for further funding.

I am visiting Mityana again in February 2006, with the group, and taking 2 sponsors who are eager to meet their sponsored children.

I have managed to obtain a grant for a young teacher in Mityana to cover her airfare to UK but unfortunately the British Consulate keep rejecting her VISA application which seems so sad.

Now is the time to renew your sponsorship for your child for next year. I would be grateful if this could reach me by December. It is even better if you could make a standing order and by gift aiding the monies we can claim 28p in every £1 back. Please find forms near the end of this Newsletter. The charity bank details are:

*HSBC 40-47-09 41515667
1-3 Market Place, Wokingham, Berks RG40 1AL*

Also, if you want to send a Christmas card to your child the address is:

Send a Child to School, PO Box 386, Mityana Uganda

Many thanks

Jean Ajin
St Sebastian's School, Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham, Berks, RG40 3AT

I became involved several years ago when the existing secretary was about to move from the area and asked me if I was interested. I knew several church members who had been there and decided that the time had come to for some positive Christian action! Prayers without action are I believe not of huge use.

Why I am involved with the charity:

At the hospital in Mityana, pigs and chickens wander in the grounds and there seem few regulations. In the children's ward, the mothers of the listless children perk up and beam at me when I hold up the camera; there is a tiny quiet baby who is

When I went to Uganda I was prepared for the contrast between rich and poor but seeing a cripple haul himself along the pavement in Kampala made me think again. He had leather pads over the palms of his hands and was presumably, a victim of polio. This was outside the bank where we exchanged our money; the bank being guarded by a man with a large automatic gun.



apparently 6 months old. Even the shrunken aids patients smile and show interest. It is all a far cry from our hard working, highly technical, NHS hospitals in the UK.

All the Ugandans were wonderfully welcoming (a double handshake) but I was unprepared for the first visit to a health clinic about 30 miles from Mityana. A sea of small black faces, the owners of which just wanted to shake hands and to curtsey on their knees, surrounded me. We were treated as royalty and entertained by children dancing and listen to reports of the health centre committee but in the small "ward" there was a gravely ill small child - malaria? We can do nothing medically; Ann anoints him with oil and prays.

Funny bits - our essential 24 hour "scent" DEET a mosquito repelling spray, the solvent in which also removed my toe nail varnish! --- Seeing another member of the party go to an evening welcome at the bishops in a high neck, long sleeved blouse, trousers tucked into thick socks and trainers -- it was a wonderful warm, velvet black, scented African night -- but the mosquitoes come out at dusk. --- Trying to take notes at a charity

meeting when the power and hence the lights had gone off.

Frustrating times - trying to sing at the cathedral when I had completely lost my voice. However the fellowship of Christians worshipping together negates this.

There were dubious moments too when we hurtled towards a heavily loaded bicycle (bananas, firewood and a person) seemingly on a collision course, to swerve at the last moment. There are speed limits but few

seem to observe them. Clouds of red dust envelope the cars when we pass others, as only some sections of the roads are tarmac. This is the only means of transport apart from walking with your possessions on head, which we did not try!

All these observations have combined to convince me that I am doing the right thing in helping to organise the charity's activities.

Sarah Birch

Amendments to the Constitution

*The following amendments (**highlighted**) are proposed to the charity's constitution so that we may incorporate a slightly wider spectrum of aid. These amendments will be voted on in the AGM in May, the date and venue of which will be announced in the spring. The full constitution may be seen on the website; only the sections that we propose to change are printed below.*

C. Objects

The Charity's objects ("the objects") are:

- 1) *The advancement of Education among children in the Mityana Diocese of Uganda, through*
 - *the funding of School building projects / educational facilities*
 - *sponsorship of children*
 - *the establishment of links with schools in the UK*
 - *the funding of appropriate medical needs to raise standards of health*
- 2) *The Relief of Poverty among the people in the Mityana Diocese, through the funding*
 - *self-help enterprises*
 - ***development of medical facilities***
- 3) *The advancement of the Christian religion, especially, but not exclusively in the Mityana Diocese, through*
 - *the sponsorship and training of clergy*

- *funding of church building projects*

G. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee may in addition appoint co-opted members as and when necessary for delegating tasks (eg projects) but so that no one may be appointed as a co-opted member if, as a result, more than one third of the members of the executive Committee would be co-opted members.

A brief history of the Mityana Charity – No 1064825

The Mityana Charity came about through a visit to the Uganda province in 1993 and again in 1995, by the Reverend Derek Burden (the then vicar of St. Sebastians church, Nine Mile ride, Wokingham Without), who, on his return informed his congregation of the hardships and suffering he had encountered. He was particularly touched by the plight of the countless orphans due to the loss of one or more of their parents, caused by the unchecked spread of AIDS. In some cases grandparents in their 80's were caring for these children in a squalid day to day existence, with no hope of respite. There was an orphanage that could be supported, if sponsors could be persuaded to pledge financial help for the children's education and from then onwards the charity was born.

From those small beginnings the charity has grown and has undertaken a myriad of other projects, both within the orphanage and out in the surrounding community. There is now a committee in Mityana who run the day to day, on the ground, tasks and report to the UK committee informing them of their progress and requirements.

It was quickly realised that education for the children was not enough. As someone said in those early days, "it's no good educating children whose stomachs are hurting because they're hungry" and it was true; the people looking after them had no money for food! The problem became an absolute priority and although it's not anywhere near 100% solved, a 'porridge pot' system was set up to provide a mid-day meal of sorts for the children.

Other urgent projects needed to be addressed, such as school classrooms, desks and chairs, blankets for new born babies in the local hospital (despite it being Africa, it does get cold at night), they even needed new water collection tanks for the hospital roof, their only source of water, and secure doors and windows for the art and craft booth that the ladies of the village ran to provide a meagre income through passing trade. We have even authorised the funding required for digging of cess pits, all very basic stuff, but vital in rural communities such as where the orphanage is situated.

UK doctors on the committee are addressing the urgent need for community medical clinics and providing training and equipment for these clinics and it's an ongoing task. A farm and clean drinkable water are two more projects that are being looked into at this present time.

Many of the problems in this troubled continent of course are caused by the greed of man and the ones that always suffer the most, without exception, are the children and the old. There is very little work for the un-educated, the infrastructure of the whole country is very basic and run down by years of neglect. For example, there are no made up roads except in the cities, and the average yearly wage is so low that the government collects little or no tax to allow for the economy to be kick-started.

The UK committee sometimes feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the task and feel like the little Dutch boy with his finger in a hole in the dyke, but our dyke has multiple holes in it. Although when several committee members have visited Mityana they have reported an amazing resilience and hope in everyone they meet and want to go back again and again at their own expense.

Their religious faith would put most of us in affluent materialistic Britain to shame and their churches and Cathedrals are full to capacity with happy worshipers for 3 hour (or more) services every Sunday!

The problems keep arising and we (the committee) keep addressing them and when they meet the criteria of our original aims, we release the necessary funds, but we can't carry on doing the good work without your help and finances.

**WE NEED YOU TO HELP US PLUG THAT DYKE!
THANK YOU.**

John Stainsby

For further details, if required, please contact:- Jean Ajin on email jean.ajin2@ntlworld.com or Sarah Birch on email sn.birch@ukonline.co.uk

Observations on Nigel's travels in Uganda (March 05)

- Hospitable, welcoming people – the “Ugandan Hug”
- Beautiful landscapes, undulating and mountainous
- Welcoming party unforgettable; takes time to say hello
- Generous – offer you their food grown from their gardens
- Impoverished way of life
- Cook on open fires outside
- Cattle being tended by a man and a boy with 1950s bike
- Very poor live in very basic shelters with little or no money to buy food
- Wattle and daub huts (Papyrus used for roofs / wooden shelters)
- Some brick houses with tin roofs – usually very small 2 – 3 rooms ground floor
- Many unfinished buildings – ran out of money
- Toilets are a hole in the ground – the latrine
- Many homes have a garden where bananas or maize are grown for family consumption
- No Electricity just oil lamps at night gives a mystical air

- Few clothes to wear but many are smartly dressed
- Lots of bikes and some cars or trucks
- Minibuses, taxis, Boda-Boda (passenger on motorbike) and sometimes a local bus for transport
- Most people walk
- Children walk early in morning to school and back again
- Carry water or food on their heads – mostly women
- Water from large tanks in village / towns –“Water Aid”
- Smell of wood smoke on getting out of the aircraft
- Men and women cultivating with handhoes
- Large tea plantations employ local people and their families
- Climate was not as hot and humid as I expected – warm at night. Pleasant temperature of 25C during day and heavy rain showers
- A hive of activity in the towns and villages where market stalls have a plentiful supply of vegetables and fruit to sell
- Most people walk and a very few have transport
- Terrible roads even in Kampala
- They drive on the left as in the UK

My lasting image of Uganda is of a surprisingly fertile country that lacks the resources to capitalise on their natural treasures – being able to develop their agriculture, provide education for all and improve health care would be a worthy ideal.

The Unexpected:

I realised pretty quickly that you had to respond to the unexpected event. I was informed on Saturday evening (8pm at the Enro Hotel) that I was to be on the local Radio station with the Bishop of Mityana Diocese (Duncan Bukunya) – his regular Sunday morning slot at 6.30am.

What do you do? Well you just get on with it and hope for the best – I didn’t have any excuses. I thought you would be interested in the questions I was asked – thank goodness the presenter had written them down because I had great difficulty understanding his accent. My answers seemed to go down well.

Questions asked by Radio presenter:

1. How have you found the climatic conditions of our country?
2. The people of Mityana feel so grateful to host such a big people from a developed country. What developmental agenda do you have for us?
3. Most of the developed countries seem to have little time for prayers – what are some of the challenges that have culminated from Jesus?
4. Yes you’re coming from a developed country compare and contrast the spiritual development in your country and ours.
5. Ecumenism seems to be a good practise amongst religions in Uganda. You as a strong Anglican, what advice can you contribute to these ideas?
6. Most Ugandans die of the AIDS stigma. Compare the state in your country with ours.

7. Homosexual practice is a forbidden idea in God's Plan for sex. Why is it that most of the developed countries engage in such practises?
8. The youth constitutes 65% of the entire population in the World. You as a powerful member from a developed country, what plans do you have to see that they don't waste a lot of time watching pornographic films?

Completed the interview with a resume of what the Mityana Charity does – it's aims and some examples of what has been achieved emphasising the Child Sponsorship scheme as our primary activity. Finally gave an example of the difference this makes to the lives of individual young people by quoting some of the words of a song written and composed by one of our former sponsored children (now 20 years of age with a job).

Computers for small town Uganda!

Becoming involved in the charity has a great effect on some families! Once one person is "hooked" the rest

often seem to get infected with enthusiasm!. This is the case with Ann Potts and her son Roger who are, at the time of writing, heading for Uganda, For Roger this is his first experience and for Ann the fifth time.

When Roger heard about the problems being experienced by the Tropical College of Commerce and Computer Science in Mityana he thought he might be able to help. The problem was that although they taught computer science they didn't have any computers! He has shown incredible skill, patience and dedication in accepting all sorts of out of date machines -everyone's cast offs – assorted power leads, monitors etc to check, disassemble and put together so they WORK - the important bit speaking as a non technical support assistant.! Many thanks to all the people who donated machines but the real thanks should go to Roger who has spent so many hours and personal cost working on them. The Professor at the College is absolutely delighted with 23 networking machines which Roger will see working during his visit.

It is good to know that there is a spin off from our very affluent home town of Wokingham where many cars, electrical goods and consumer items are replaced long before they wear out. Competitive western technology has brought this about but at least others benefit in the process.

Many thanks too go to David Russell also, who has recently engineered the transport of the consignments to Mityana; speaking as one who had to cart around one bubble wrapped computer in bits at the airport I am sure it was a relief not to have to cope with over 20!

Ann Potts and Sarah Birch

The Abigail Experience...

When I opened my Christmas presents last year and found out that I was going to Mityana with my mother my jaw dropped. I had seen photos and clips on the TV about poverty but I didn't really take interest in it seriously until I found out. My initial thoughts were "Oh no I am going to a foreign country I am so scared!"

As a child I had always wanted to do something that would help the poor and diseased in our world. I had a dream of setting up my own charity and going to Africa and working with the children. Watching the Vicar Of Dibley that Christmas day, I didn't realise the figures of poverty in this world. Just looking at the screen my heart sank and I burst out into tears. It was so sad to see 2 young children crying over their dead mother and dying father. It really put the trip into perspective and I realised that I would actually be needed out there.

I was scared as the days leading up to the trip whizzed past, I had been doing a lot of thinking and extreme amounts of worrying but surprisingly couldn't wait to get on that plane and see what I had been longing to.

When we stepped off the plane a smell wafted past us, it smelt of Africa! I was so tired but at the same time I was excited as Moses, John and Michael met us from the aeroplane. They took me by the hand and said "You are most welcome!" I could see the Africans were very happy to see us. They took



us to a little shack where we sat down and had a drink with all of them. It felt strange to be one of the only white faces there in amongst a sea of black. In the minivan I fell asleep on my mothers lap for basically the whole journey and whilst I was sleeping I had a strange dream that I was on holiday sun-bathing in Italy. When I woke up it hit me that I was in Africa and I was on a mission. I felt an instant connection with Moses because he was the youngest and had a smile that could light up a room. We spent the rest of the journey quizzing each other about religion and life back in England. Questioning him I realised that he was looking after his 3 nieces of his brother and his sister that had sadly died from aids.

Stepping off the minibuss and arriving at the Enro Hotel will be an experience that I shall never forget. A hand reached out to me as if from nowhere and I grabbed it and it pulled me out of the bus until I reached the ground. I looked up and realised the hand belonged to Moses. He greeted us again with "You are most welcome!" and we were welcome. Happy smiling faces came to greet us from everywhere.

That evening we met Bishop Dunstan Bukonya. He was a tall man with a deep voice dressed in purple; he picked me up and said "Hello

Abigail" I giggled as he slowly put me down and called me **heavy**.

We went into his house and were we all sat round a table as the food was passed around. Speeches were made and they were longer than anticipated. When they were over the lights went out and mum asked why they had gone out. The answer was "The electricity has gone over to Kenya now!"

I enjoyed the first trip because I saw how the other half live and they are living in extremely poor conditions and that's unfair. In Africa every 5 minutes a person dies of AIDS and HIV because they are too poor to afford the right medicine and in my

mind to see sick children that have so much potential is very sad because given the chance they could do something great with their lives.

A verse that came to me the other day is Psalms 113 v7: **He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap.**

This verse really speaks to me because it was a lot to do with what I was thinking during that time.

Abigail Weir

Abigail's mum, Karla, also writes:

Aged 13, I wanted to be a vet. Then I heard a missionary doctor from Rwanda speak. As I listened, I knew God wanted me to help people, not animals. That night, I made a Gideon style pact. 'If God enabled me to get into Medicine, I would go to Africa'.

Memories of Mityana

Innumerable (!) years later, under a Ugandan night sky, I am singing 'O happy day' in English while our African friends sing in Lugandan. Their joy is evident. I know their God is my God. Their Saviour is my Saviour. I am in Sub-Saharan Africa. Jesus died for us.

Memories, images flash through my mind.

Malnourished children; tattered T-shirts, smiling songs of welcome. School; a mud hut; a few exercise books. The Bishop prays for them. Tears flow, I leave unseen. I can't pray.

John, a toddler, on the rusty clinic couch. My husband listens to his heaving chest. A gesture, we can do nothing. I pray. He has AIDS. Hospital care, miles away. He will die soon. My brother is called John.

Packed Paediatric wards; 3 per bed, floor cases. Hope absent from innocent eyes. Malaria kills an African child every 30 seconds. The leading cause of child mortality here. The hospital is filthy, needles lying around, no mosquito nets. Sleeping regularly under a net reduces malaria by 46%.

A young boy collects water from a muddy, disgusting pool, 2 miles from his hut. His 4th trip today. My son's expression trying to lift that 20 litre jerry can.

A maternity unit. 2 wooden beds, no mattress. Nearest hospital 30 miles. There is no transport. Hearing about 2 maternal deaths every week. Dedicated staff working so hard, their faith strong. I bite my lip. They have to watch these mums die, not me.

The Orphanage dormitory. Sponge mattresses crawling with bed bugs. Insecticide cannot reach joints in wooden bunks. I try not to retch. Metal bunks £30. These blessed children have a bed, whilst street children in Mityana sleep under hedges. 2 million orphans in Uganda out of a population of 24 million.

Church. Youth choirs singing. 52% of population under 15. Rapturous faces, full of faith in God's provision. Awe-inspiring, humbling worship; they have so little. In heaven you'll find me in the Ugandan choir.

Moses, 25, and my son sleeping in the van, white leaning against black. A Youth leader/teacher raising his 3 beautiful nieces alone in a tiny room. AIDS orphans. Great fun, wonderful sense of humour.

Moses is praying. It is the last night of our incredible 12 day trip. Honouring my promise has been an uplifting experience. We came to give but instead depart having received so much. I do not want to leave.

Another pact:

God if you allow me to return to this beautiful place with its wonderful people I promise to tell everyone of the need and bring back money for equipment (malaria net £3, bike £35), for training (midwifery £800), for water (Clinic £200).

For John, a special promise, to fund training for AIDS prevention counsellors.

My prayer: 'Soften hearts to help my friends.'

If your church/group would like to hear more of Mityana and how to help, the Weir family would be delighted to share their experiences and can be contacted through St Sebastian's Parish Office. 01344-761050

Please send Standing Order and/or Gift Aid Forms to the Mityana Charity
Treasurer as follows:

Janice Knox at 47 Penn Road, Datchet, Slough, Berkshire SL3 9HS

STANDING ORDER

To _____ Bank Sort: _____ Account No: _____

Account Name: _____

Branch Address: _____

Date _____ Tel: _____

HSBC Bank: Wokingham

Beneficiary Sort Code: 40-47-09

Beneficiary Account Number: 41515667

Beneficiary Name: **Mityana Charity**

Amount: _____

Date of First

Payment: _____

Amount of Subsequent Payments: _____ (if different from the first payment)

Date of Final Payment or Until Further Notice (UFN): _____

Due Date and Frequency of

Payments: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

PRAYER POINTS

- Praise God for all that we have achieved together; we know that without Him, we could do little
- We thank God for all the help that has come from so many people both in the UK and in Uganda and we ask for continued guidance in all that we seek to do
- We pray that the committee in Mityana may work together in advancing the education of both adults and children and the welfare of all the people in Mityana
- Pray that the Ugandan committee might all enjoy good health
- Pray for Margaret Serumkuma who has difficulty walking and looking after the orphan children
- Pray for all the adults and youth involved in planning the visit in February 2006
- We pray for Ann Potts as she travels around Mityana on her missions
- Pray for continued healing for our chairman, Nigel Birch
- We pray for the family and friends of the late Bishop Yokana
- Pray for Bishop Dunstan in all that he does in Mityana Diocese to help his community





Registered Charity No. 1064825

GIFT AID DECLARATION

I am a UK tax payer and want the Mityana Charity to treat all donations I have made since 6th April 2005, and all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid Donations.

Please complete your details here as the information is part of your declaration.

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Signature:

Date:

You can cancel the declaration at any time by notifying us, it will then not apply to donations you make on or after the date of cancellation.

You must pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax that we reclaim on your donations in the tax year (the basic rate currently being 28p for each £1 you give).

If you pay tax at the higher rate you can claim further tax relief in your self assessment tax return.

Please return this completed form to:

Janice Knox

47 Penn Road, Datchet, Slough, Berkshire SL3 9HS