

**A FORMER CHILD SOLDIER'S STORY**

Read Jimmy's Story about how he escaped from Joseph Kony's army and ended up at Mtaala's partner school. P2

**SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENTS & A SPONSOR'S VIEW**

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

**INSIDE THE SCIENCE LAB**

Check out photographs of the science lab from start to finish. P5

**WORLDS APART: TWO SCHOOLS TOGETHER**

Learn how Educational Partnerships change students' lives on two continents. P7

**MTAALA'S ONLINE STORE**

Purchase our students' original artwork or handmade Ugandan necklaces. P7

## THE JOY OF DISCOVERY AT AWEGYS

"If it weren't for you, I never would have seen a microscope," Barbara wrote to her sponsors. That is the joy of discovery, the joy of science! That joy is alive and well in the new science laboratory at Awegys Secondary School in Kigo, Uganda.

For the past year, Mtaala raised funds to build and stock the science laboratory at the school. The laboratory is critical for several reasons. Hands-on experiments promote learning and understanding, which, in turn should enhance students' performance on their national exams. If students want to choose the 'A' Level Science and Engineering track for their last two years of secondary school, a science lab is essential.

And many of our students dream of becoming scientists, nurses, doctors, and engineers. The lab brings them that much closer to realizing their dreams. Perhaps most importantly, the lab provides our students with the joy of scientific discovery--even a discovery as simple as peering at a specimen through a microscope.

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## Health Clinic: Under Construction

49% of Uganda's population is under the age of 15, and approximately 2.5 million orphans live in Uganda, a country the size of the state of Oregon in the U.S.A. As of 2005, 52% of all Ugandans were living below the international poverty line of \$1.25 per day, making Uganda one of the poorest countries in the world.

Connected with the challenges of poverty are the immense health problems facing many Ugandans. In 2007, as many as 80,000 people died from AIDS, and an estimated 7.3 % of the adult population is living with HIV, giving Uganda the 10th highest HIV rate in the world. The country frequently experiences shortages in HIV/AIDS treatment drugs.

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**An Awegys student completes her first science lab in the new science laboratory stocked with science equipment.**

## Licensed and Registered

In January 2012, Awegys Secondary School achieved a significant goal: it was licensed by the Ugandan government. Although already registered, in order to be licensed the school needed to meet certain criteria put forth by the Ministry of Education in Uganda. With the help of Mtaala's donors and Educational Partners and the dedication of our volunteers in Uganda, the necessary improvements were made to the school's infrastructure and the license awarded.

Having a license allows the school to serve as a National Exam Center. This is significant because it means that our students no longer have to travel long distances to sit for their national exams--something that proved difficult and expensive. Awegys students and others who so choose, can sit for their annual exams at Awegys School.

Being licensed also enhances the school's standing, and increases the chance of receiving nominal funds from the Ugandan government.

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## Coming Soon: Our New Website

Check out photos of our work and enjoy videos from Awegys School in Uganda.

[www.mtaala.org](http://www.mtaala.org)



# A FORMER CHILD SOLDIER TELLS HIS STORY

## JIMMY'S STORY



Jimmy Odong, an orphan from Kitgum, Northern Uganda, was abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel group, in 2005. He was fourteen years old.

He was a porter for one week before being trained to fight: to use a machete in hand-to-hand combat, to load and shoot a machine gun, to fire a rocket-propelled grenade launcher, and to lay land mines. As soon

as his training was complete, he was ordered to fight on the frontline. In the words of his Commander, "Now the LRA has given you the power to kill someone; you must do it." And if Jimmy refused, he would be killed.

Jimmy went on to fight for many months, and killing quickly became routine. During this time he was wounded twice in combat, shot in the right leg and the left arm. Though his leg healed, his arm did not. He was not given adequate medical attention, and risked losing it. His platoon's surrender came just in time.

He and thirteen other young rebel soldiers were taken, first, to government barracks, where they were questioned for one week about their time in the bush, then, to a reception center in Gulu that cared for returnees – those recently escaped or freed. His arm was, at long last, treated. He was also fed well and encouraged to rest.

For the first few weeks there Jimmy barely spoke, other than to utter his name, and he never smiled. He was numb inside, and had been for a long time. However, as the weeks became months he started to feel more, receiving counseling and emotional support from those who worked at the center, and it was not long before his smile finally returned.

From there, Jimmy went back to live with his grandmother at an IDP camp (Internally Displaced People). Jimmy was unable to sleep unless there was a bible under his pillow and a crucifix around his neck. He suffered from nightmares, and each time he had one, he prayed he would not have another.

Eventually, a representative from Mtaala Foundation met Jimmy at his home in the camp. Jimmy shared his dream of attending school. Mtaala



Foundation enrolled Jimmy in Mtaala Foundation's partner school in Kigo, Uganda: Awegys Christian Secondary School. In school, Jimmy has emerged as a model student and dedicated leader. And these days, he is rarely seen without a smile.



Now in school, Jimmy participates in Awegys School's weekly Community Reading Day. Community Reading Day is the students' way of "paying it forward" by reading, singing, and dancing with the younger village children every Saturday.

To read more students' stories, visit our gallery page at [www.mtaala.org](http://www.mtaala.org).



### Donate Your Old Cell Phone

Rather than letting your old cell phone sit in your drawer, or--even worse--tossing it in trash that gets dumped in a landfill, mail your old cell phone to The Mtaala Foundation. Funds raised from donated cell phones will be used to help our students and partner school in Kigo, Uganda.

Mtaala Foundation  
230 Kings Highway East, #136  
Haddonfield, NJ 08033 USA

## SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENTS



**NAME:** Gloria    **AGE:** Fifteen    **GRADE:** Primary Seven

**ABOUT GLORIA:** Gloria is fifteen years old and in Primary Seven. She currently lives with her mother and two of her five siblings. In 2002, her father was killed by the Lord's Resistance Army rebels. Since that time, her mother has worked as a peasant farmer in order to support her family. Gloria and her two of her sisters have dropped out of school because of lack of school fees. "Please help me get school fees," asks Gloria kindly.

**FAVORITE SUBJECT:** English

**DREAMS OF:** She wishes to become an inspector of schools so she can improve students' education in her country.

To become a sponsor, visit us online at [www.mtaala.org](http://www.mtaala.org).

## A SPONSOR'S PERSPECTIVE MAKING CONNECTIONS ACROSS CONTINENTS

### Giving and Receiving – One Blessed Event

By Sherry Pae

I started sponsoring a child at the Aweygs School three years ago. I knew that the financial support I would be providing was for a "good cause." I had no idea that the gift I was offering would enrich not only a child's life, but that I too would be deeply touched in unimagined ways.

Initially, I felt satisfied, knowing that I could help change a child's life just by giving money! Although that in and of itself was a wonderful experience, what I have continued to receive since has been completely surprising, humbling, and everlasting.



*Beatrice practices using a stethoscope, a gift from Sherry, one of her sponsors and the author of this article.*

I receive letters from Beatrice, the beautiful young girl I have had the privilege of co-sponsoring, and each time I am gifted by her profound appreciation and ability to receive. She embodies and expresses a kind of reverence for the giving I have rarely experienced.

Beatrice's ability to receive has taught me to pause each time I give and to give with awareness. Remembering Beatrice's reverence and gratitude, I feel grateful for all that I have received. I feel profoundly connected to the source of all giving, and I experience a fundamental knowing that the one giving and the one receiving are indeed the same.

Beatrice, Aweygs Secondary School, and the Mtaala Foundation, each remind me of what is important in this life: the experience of loving kindness, gratitude, and the knowing that we are truly one family, that giving and receiving are indeed one blessed event.

Being a sponsor has been one of the most precious gifts I have ever received. Thank you, Beatrice, and my heart felt gratitude for each one that has made this experience, this gift of giving possible for me.



## Health Clinic: Under Construction continued from pg. 1

Malaria is a common problem in Uganda: In 2003, over 12,000,000 cases of malaria were reported. Malaria is responsible for 25% of all visits to hospitals. There have also been several outbreaks of the Ebola virus in Uganda, and children in northern Uganda are suffering from a neurological illness of unknown origins called Nodding Disease.

There is speculation that this illness is somehow linked to Uganda's protracted civil war.

Uganda has a high infant mortality rate, and the average life expectancy is 54 years of age. An estimated 40% of Ugandans are without access to safe drinking water and 57% do not have access to improved sanitation facilities--a major health concern.

Needless to say, these health problems are compounded by limited access to health care. There are only 1 or 2 health centers in a sub-county, and those that do exist are understocked and understaffed, resulting in extremely long waits for those people who actually make it to a clinic.

It takes, on the average, about 5-6 hours for a pregnant woman in labor to reach a health center. A woman suffering from a complicated labor often does not even make it to a health center, but passes away along the way.

Some women in the villages give birth at home with the help of traditional birth attendants, thereby avoiding the long walk and long lines at the health unit. Unfortunately, this puts them at increased risk for maternal death.

The health clinic at Awegys School will address many health conditions from which our students and people in the surrounding village suffer. These common conditions include but are not limited to: Malaria, diarrhea, parasitic worms, dysentery, fungal skin infections, flu, and viruses. Left untreated, many illnesses become serious, even fatal.

The clinic will also serve as a health education center and address topics such as HIV prevention, maternal health, prenatal care, hygiene, and healthy life choices.



1



2



3

1. Construction begins on the clinic.
2. Construction is complete on half of the clinic.
3. Awegys students and local village children stand in front of the partially completed clinic at Awegys School. Once completed, it will be the only pediatric clinic in the area.

### Give the Gift of Health:

**Help stock and staff our new health clinic,  
the only pediatric clinic in the area, at Awegys School.**

**Please visit [www.mtaala.org](http://www.mtaala.org) and make a donation earmarked for the clinic.**

# The Science Lab: From Start to Finish continued from pg. 1



Construction begins on the new science lab that is attached to the first classroom block built at Awegys School.



The teacher distributes chemicals for the lab.



The interior of the lab is plastered and counters are built.



A student takes notes during the science lab while her teacher and fellow students analyze information.



The laboratory is painted. Shelves and cabinet doors are hung.



Students mix and heat chemicals during class.



A teacher leads a small group of students in their first lab!



The students work with partners to complete their experiments in the school's new science lab.





In addition to being registered by the Ministry of Schools, Mtaala has worked diligently over the past several years to earn Awegys Secondary School's license. One of the requirements was a desk for every student. Thanks to the dedication and generosity of Mtaala's Educational Partner, Rosa International Middle School, every Awegys' student now has his or her own desk--with storage!

**1 Mtaala's program is unique.** We work with you to set goals based on our school's needs and your organization's interest.

**2 You get tangible results.** The members of your organization actually **SEE** the results of their and dedication generosity.

**4 Reasons to Become an Educational Partner**

**3 Receive a real thank you.** We will send photos and our Ugandan students will send thank you letters about what your donations accomplished.

**4 Build global awareness.** As an Educational Partner, you will help to build relationships between your organization and our students in Uganda.

## SOME OF OUR STUDENTS' ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. Overcoming extreme poverty, orphanhood, and war, all Awegys students passed their exams in January 2012 and moved on to the next level in their education.
2. One of our students from Northern Uganda scored in the top 1% of all Ugandans on the national exam--even competing against wealthy students who attend Uganda's elite schools.
3. Our first graduates: five of Awegys' students graduated with a complete secondary diploma, putting them in the 7% of all Ugandans to finish secondary school.

**Changes at Awegys have a Positive Impact: In just four years, our student enrollment has grown from 25 to 85 students!**

## A Needy Gift

By Namakula Sharifah, an Awegys Student

Oh! If I could get  
That thing I love so much  
Not a ship nor a train  
Nothing as much.

If only I could get it.  
I would never forget it  
Because it's sweet,  
Like honey.

If I get it,  
With joy I would burst.  
It is something just true  
I will get it.

A poem to quench my thirst.

# WORLDS APART: A TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS LEARNING TOGETHER

By Maureen McHale, Assistant Principal of Rosa International Middle School

This year Rosa International Middle School in Cherry Hill, NJ celebrates the fifth anniversary of our relationship with the Mtaala Foundation and its partner school, Awegys Secondary School in Kigo, Uganda. Rosa's relationship with Awegys Secondary School has provided our students with multiple opportunities for student leadership, service learning, entrepreneurship, and education about global issues.

One such example is a Rosa student who had a vision. As a seventh grader, Catie Conor had an idea for a service-learning project that involved fundraising for Awegys. With the assistance of a teacher and the school administration, Catie formed a student committee that she named Stars Over Africa.

As an 8<sup>th</sup> grader the following year, Catie chaired this student committee and formulated a plan for a student variety show that would raise funds for Awegys school. From that first year, the Stars Over Africa service-learning project has grown and flourished at Rosa, and every year, former members who have moved on to high school return to lend a hand.

Other students have held bake sales, sponsored bowling parties, and organized scrapbooking events. Each year, these events focus on one project to benefit the Awegys students: from a water well, to a library, science equipment, and most recently, classroom desks. But Rosa's students don't just raise funds, they also learn about the issue behind the project--whether it's the global water crisis, worldwide literacy, or inadequate access to healthcare.

What is remarkable, too, is that Rosa's students see the results of their efforts. Each year, the Mtaala Foundation sends us photographs and videos of what our efforts accomplished. Each year, the students at Awegys send us letters of gratitude and handmade posters. And each year, our students learn a little more about the world beyond their classroom walls and how, working together, we can all make the world a better place. As one Rosa student said when watching a slide show of the water well being installed at Awegys School: "Wow! We did that."

The Rosa school community has been honored and privileged to partner with Awegys School these past five years. We look forward to continuing this relationship in the years to come. Learning together and from one another--regardless of our place in the world--is one of the finest legacies we can leave as school communities.

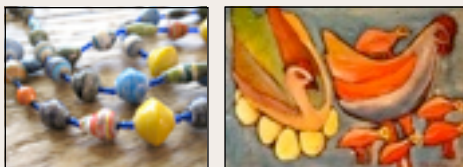


Children usually grow up without toys in Uganda, so they learn to make toys from found items. Above, students at Awegys School in Uganda make toy cars--headlights and all--from scrap wire, old batteries, and paper. Mtaala shipped the cars to Rosa's STEM program. Rosa students made and sent thank you cards to Awegys students in Uganda.

## Shop Mtaala's Online Stores

[www.etsy.com/shop/mtaalafoundation](http://www.etsy.com/shop/mtaalafoundation)

[www.charitygiftmarket.com/mtaala](http://www.charitygiftmarket.com/mtaala)



Visit Mtaala's online stores to purchase our students' original paintings on Ugandan barkcloth and beautiful Ugandan necklaces made out of recycled paper. All proceeds go directly to our program in Uganda.

## Mtaala Chapters

The Nursing Students' Chapter of Mtaala Foundation (NSCMF) was recently created by nursing students in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to raise funds and solicit supplies for the new clinic at Awegys School in Kigo, Uganda. Thank you members of NSCMF for making a difference!

If you would like to become an educational partner with Awegys Secondary School in Uganda by creating a Mtaala Chapter in your community, contact us at [info@mtaala.org](mailto:info@mtaala.org).

# 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...

**STOCK AND STAFF THE NEW SCHOOL CLINIC** In order to provide quality and accessible healthcare for our students, the Mtaala Foundation built the only pediatric health clinic in the area at Awegys Secondary School. Our goal this year is to raise funds to stock and staff the clinic. The clinic will help prevent and treat the many health threats

Consider visiting our website to make a donation earmarked for the clinic. If you are interested in donating and sending medical equipment to Uganda, please contact us at [info@mtaala.org](mailto:info@mtaala.org) to discuss our needs and your ideas. Thank you!

**IMPROVED SANITATION** The latrines at Awegys Secondary School are in need of renovation. Access to adequate sanitation facilities is something many of us take for granted. Please consider making a donation to our "Latrine" fund. It may not sound very glamorous, but new latrines will improve the quality of life for all of our students.

## 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.

**STOCKING THE SCHOOL LIBRARY** "Community Hope Library" is the hub of Awegys school and Kigo village itself. Our library is always in need of books. If you are interested in sending a box of gently used books to Uganda, please contact us at [info@mtaala.org](mailto:info@mtaala.org).

**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.

## FUTURE DREAMS...

**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.

HELP MAKE IT HAPPEN: TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THESE PROJECTS  
OR MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE MTAALA FOUNDATION, VISIT [WWW.MTAALA.ORG](http://WWW.MTAALA.ORG).

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### UK

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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  
[WWW.MTAALA.ORG](http://WWW.MTAALA.ORG)

