



## THE MTAALA FOUNDATION

Mtaala means learning.

2009-2010  
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Visit us online at [www.mtaala.org](http://www.mtaala.org).

## THE JOYS OF WATER

This July, the campus of Awegys Secondary School buzzed with activity as the school—and the surrounding community of Kigo—witnessed the construction of its first water well.

Previously, Awegys students and villagers were forced to fetch water from a muddy village creek often littered with garbage. The task of fetching water took an hour to complete and occurred several times per day as the students lugged heavy jerrycans down the road. To lighten the load, some students would pair up with each other, taking turns as they carried the water back to school.

### THE WELL OF LIVING WATER

Now, life is a little easier—and healthier. The well at Awegys School provides fresh, clean water to Awegys students and residents of the surrounding village. And since the well is located on school grounds, the students no longer lose valuable study time walking for water. The well was an ongoing project of the Mtaala Foundation,

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Above: Awegys School Founder and Director Alice Wegoye shares the first water from the newly drilled well.

## THE MTAALA FOUNDATION: ABOUT OUR NEW NAME

As of September of 2008, Outside the Dream was a U.S based organization in need of a board of directors. Over the course of several months, we created a new board of directors that included citizens from the U.S. and U.K. who came together with one goal. That goal was and is to provide educational opportunities for Uganda's vulnerable students: students affected by the 22 year long civil war, the AIDS epidemic, and relentless poverty.

During the organization's metamorphosis, the international board sought a name change reflective of the organization's roots—hence our new name, Mtaala Foundation. Mtaala means learning in Swahili, a common East African language.

During that same time frame, the organization came across Alice Wegoye, an inspiring Ugandan woman who shared our goal. As a matter of fact, she had already sacrificed her home and meager pension to create a school for her country's neediest students. (To read more about Alice's efforts, please see "A Letter from Alice, pg. 4).

Thus, the Mtaala Foundation has evolved into a small international community, as citizens from three countries have joined together to help vulnerable Ugandan students help themselves—and in doing so, help us all.

## THROUGH A CHILD'S EYES

In 2009, Awegys students had the unique opportunity to complete a five-week workshop in digital photography with a visiting professional photojournalist and artist, Amy Mullarkey. Amy also secured the donation of a number of digital cameras for the school. The students learned about



composition and took field trips into the surrounding village to practice their techniques. At the workshop's end, students received prints of their work—a first for every student in the class. Several photographs were featured in an auction, with proceeds benefitting the Mtaala Foundation's work. More on Amy Mullarkey's work with the Mtaala Foundation can be found at [www.mtaala.org](http://www.mtaala.org).

# MEET THE MTAALA FOUNDATION

## A Note from the Mtaala Country Director in Uganda

Hello and greetings from the Mtaala Foundation in Uganda!

Recently, I, along with a visiting volunteer from the foundation in England, went out to work in the communities of war-ravaged Northern Uganda, where we were identifying and assessing the neediest of needy children to help—on invitation of the community leaders. My colleague was in total astonishment over the level of poverty which, together with HIV/AIDS and the two decade long war, has greatly incapacitated the majority of families in this sub-region, producing many orphans unable to afford education.

In Uganda, we have Universal Primary Education, a new government policy under which primary education is supposed to be free. The government is also struggling to start Universal Secondary Education. Excellent though this objective is, the programs have largely failed for several reasons including lack of teachers, school meals, teaching materials and buildings. This means that even with this 'free' education in place, the only way to have quality education is to pay for it, which further makes it impossible for many of the children to access.

Among the many other things that astonished the volunteer was the fact that many children continue to drop out of school and marry at tender ages, the many helpless orphans, child-headed families, and the distribution of these challenges in the community—where almost all members in a given village suffer the same challenges.

What she found encouraging, though, was the number of kids who choose to repeat P.7, the last grade of primary school to avoid dropping out of school. And regardless of all the challenges, the children still dream big and yearn for an opportunity to an education to achieve these dreams. At the end of her two-week trip, I could see her determination to fly back home and try to find the much-needed sponsors for these children, so that their dreams are not washed away by the endless number of challenges they face at such tender ages, but rather have their hope and capacity to achieve dreams restored.

Finding sponsors for extremely needy children and building quality schools for these children define our core programs. The need here is still great but we have also registered tremendous success in our programs—many thanks to you all who have made this possible. Beyond the financial support that comes with the sponsorship you provide is the crucial internal transformation the children undergo, such as development or restoration of self-confidence, a sense of belonging, self-esteem, hope and determination to achieve their dreams through education. The happiness and joy our students express when we inform them about getting a sponsor is only comparable to the joy that comes with getting another lease to life.

In order to ensure quality education for these needy children, through our school partnership program, we partnered with Awegys school in Kigo, Wakiso district, which we continue to transform into a quality school. The wish-list is still long, but we have continued to register success. My sincere appreciation to everyone who has, together with the Kigo community, supported and who continues to support this cause by donating funds and materials. Needless to say, I assure you that 100% of funds and materials donated through the Mtaala Foundation will always go towards the intended purpose.

On my own behalf, that of the team in Uganda, and that of the kids, thank you all for the hard work and sacrifices you make to restore children's dreams and hopes through supporting our work. Without your help, none of it would be possible.

ANDREW WEGOYE  
Uganda Country Director

**“The happiness and joy our students express when we inform them about getting a sponsor is only comparable to the joy that comes with getting another lease to life.”**

## SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENTS



**NAME:** Hajarah      **AGE:** 14

**GRADE LEVEL:** Senior One

**BACKGROUND:** Hajarah lives with her mother. Her father left the family seven years ago, and her sisters dropped out of school to get married. Hajarah's mother is unemployed but struggles to take care of her family by cultivating crops. Hajarah, too, tries to support herself. "I don't want to drop out of school, so I sell maize and yams in the village to raise some money to buy school materials," she says. "I will be grateful if I get a sponsor because I will be able to concentrate on my studies."

**FAVORITE HOBBIES:** Volleyball, music, dance, and drama

**DREAMS OF:** Attending university and becoming a nurse so she can help others

Hajarah is in need of a sponsorship. To become a sponsor, visit us online.

## WHERE READING BEGINS

On any given Saturday in Kigo, you can find three dozen students sitting in the shade of an expansive tree, reading. Their fingers run across the glossy pages of children's books, and the air is filled with words as the older students read aloud to younger children from the village. It's Community Reading Day: the latest project of the Mtaala Foundation.

Concerned by the challenges of literacy in the village of Kigo and the lack of reading culture in Uganda, the Mtaala Foundation created the program to encourage reading and promote community service. Every Saturday afternoon, children from the local village gather with Awegys Secondary students under the tree across from Awegys School.

The children play games, dance, sing, and drum before pairing off with an Awegys student and settling down with a book. Because the younger children are still learning English, the Awegys students translate the texts aloud from Luganda to English, and everyone leaves the day's program having learned a few new words. As they

read, the children huddle together, eager to see the colorful pictures splashed across each page.

The participants are a testament to the program's success: every week, the children continue to arrive of their own initiative, curious to see the assortment of books provided by the Mtaala Foundation.



*Deborah, an Awegys student sponsored by the Mtaala Foundation, calls on children eager to share newly-learned vocabulary words with the group. Visit our website for more photos of Community Reading Day and other Mtaala programs.*

Community Reading Day is also a leadership opportunity for the secondary students of Awegys: each week, two different students are selected to lead the day's events.

Since the program began, our students continue to become more curious about reading and have a weekly opportunity to practice their language skills as they give back to their community. The Community Reading Day program has also acquainted

the younger children with Awegys Secondary School, planting the seed of continuing education in their minds...and *that's* what we call giving back.

## A LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER OF AWEGYS SCHOOL

Dear friends,

I am Ms. Alice Wegoye, a Ugandan citizen, professional teacher and administrator, and now a retiree. I am clocking sixty-three next September and yet I don't feel done.



Having observed the constraints faced by both parents and learners in accessing quality education in Kigo, Uganda, I realized the need to start a school that would provide meaningful education for everyone. Kigo village has low economic indicators, with the population largely depending on peasant farming. Poverty and widespread lack of social services have created a difficult life for the population and, more severely, for the children in Kigo village.

Given these conditions, in 2004, I chose to vacate my home premises to create a school for the needy, orphaned, and disadvantaged students of Kigo. While I started with just four students in my sitting room, today there are forty-five students and more to come!

I am indeed grateful to the Mtaala Foundation which has amazingly given us support in developing the school. We now have five classrooms, a well for water, solar power, musical instruments, textbooks, and are working to develop the school library. We have seen many improvements and look forward to more developments in the future.

In addition to developing the school's facilities, the Mtaala Foundation has also given remarkable support to our students. Because of extreme poverty in Kigo, most of our students are unable to pay their school fees. To date, the foundation has provided sponsorships for half of the school's students, providing the students with tuition and supporting them with academic and living materials.

I wish to express my gratitude to all those who continue to support Awegys School through the Mtaala Foundation, and we look forward to more good work! May you be blessed.

Sincerely,

Alice Wegoye  
Founder and Director,  
Awegys Secondary School

## FAST FACT

Most students in Uganda do not complete primary school, and only 16% of male students and 14% of female students go on to attend secondary school.



Of these students, only 40% complete secondary school.

## WHEN GIRLS TAKE THE LEAD

This summer, the female students of Awegys School spent nine weeks learning the value of leadership in a **Girls' Leadership Workshop** implemented by Mtaala intern Elizabeth Seibert.

The program, designed with the support of the Alice Paul Institute in New Jersey, U.S., taught approximately twenty girls about leadership skills, including public speaking and problem-solving. Female leaders from around the world served as role models for the students involved.

But it didn't end there: as a hands-on component to the workshop, the students identified a problem in the community and began working from the ground up to change it. They decided to combat the lack of environmental awareness in the region, and founded the Awegys Environmental Greenstars. The co-ed group now works to meet environmental challenges on the school's campus and educate the surrounding community about environmentally-friendly practices. Already they have planted a garden on campus, and their work continues, with the girls taking on leadership roles within the group.

"It is also a dream in our hearts that one day we shall be leaders in [the] future," the girls wrote at the end of the Girls' Leadership Workshop. "We have learned how to express ourselves freely and be assertive."



Sharifah, a student in the Girls' Leadership Workshop, participates during a debate that taught the girls about communication styles.

## THE JOYS OF WATER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

which partnered with Rosa International Middle School in New Jersey, U.S., to raise funds for the well.

Rosa International made the well a school-wide goal, using it as an opportunity to raise awareness of worldwide access to water. Teachers incorporated the project into their lessons, and the school was busy with bake sales and talent shows as students held fundraisers to support the construction of the well.

The middle school's commitment and creativity in working with the Mtaala Foundation to achieve the well's construction is emblematic of how schools can do good deeds while educating their students and faculty. Rosa International is continuing its work this school year by supporting another Mtaala project--building a library and funding textbooks for all Awegys students.

It was also an opportunity for the local leadership of Kigo, Uganda, to get involved. Prior to the well's construction, Mtaala worked with local leaders to create a committee that would oversee community use of the well.

As construction of the well began at Awegys this summer, dozens of local residents arrived at the school's campus and lingered throughout the day to see the establishment of the community's first well.

Since the well's completion, Awegys students and local residents savor the joy of clean water each day.



*A young girl from the surrounding village pumps water in to a jerrycan. Funded by Rosa International Middle School through the Mtaala Foundation, the well provides clean water to the Awegys School and Kigo village.*

## SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS

### BOB FEST

When high school science teacher Bob Fest learned that Awegys School—which is home to vulnerable students, orphans, and war affected children—did not have a health clinic, he said, “I’ll get it done.” It has been a mere few months since Bob, an avid outdoorsman uttered those words. And in that short period of time, Bob has organized a white water rafting trip, a tubing trip on the Delaware River, and inspired Urban Outfitters to carry a tee shirt with original art designed by one of our students in Uganda. And he’s not finished yet! Bob’s remarkable commitment to the students of Awegys has truly shown that those who can—teach.

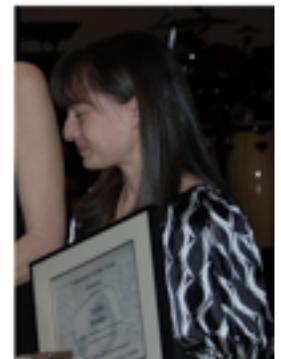


*Bob Fest has spearheaded a fundraising campaign to build, stock, and staff a clinic at Awegys School.*

(Thank you to Urban Outfitters for their support in promoting the Giraffe Charity tee at [www.urbanoutfitters.com](http://www.urbanoutfitters.com), which has helped raised several thousand dollars towards the clinic at Awegys School.)

### TAYLOR

Taylor, a high school junior from New Jersey, is not one to be stopped by a daunting challenge. Upon hearing that Awegys School was in need of additional beds for boarding students, Taylor went into action. She single-handedly raised the money to purchase eighteen bunk beds for Awegys School—enough to make sure that every student had a comfortable place to sleep at night.



*Taylor with her Volunteer of the Year Award in 2009.*

As if that weren't enough, Taylor has sponsored the education of an Awegys Student through the Mtaala Foundation, as well. In appreciation of her extraordinary dedication, Mtaala Foundation recognized Taylor as our Volunteer of the Year for 2009.

Despite her entrepreneurial skills, Taylor is no stranger to hardship. In middle school, Taylor was diagnosed with Cytomegalovirus (CMV), a disease affecting her heart and nervous system. The illness affects her life every single day, and although she must take exceptional care of her own health, she still makes the time to care for other students around the world.

# 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!

## BY JUNE, WE PLAN TO...

**BUILD AND STOCK A LIBRARY** Awegys School is in need of a permanent structure that can house a quality collection of books and materials. The school's small set of books is currently kept on shelves in a school office. A small library would not only be an accessible place for students to find resources, but a place for community members to share, as well.

**PROVIDE TEXTBOOKS FOR ALL** Right now, at Awegys School, there are limited textbooks available. Providing every classroom with textbooks that follow the Ugandan national curriculum will dramatically improve the students' learning.

**FUND PORRIDGE & GREENS** The simple addition of a daily porridge breakfast for students and greens every other day is more noteworthy than it may seem. Better nutrition will create better long term health for our students, as well as improve their day-to-day concentration in school.

## ONGOING PROJECTS INCLUDE...

**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.

**PURCHASING NEW LAND FOR SCHOOL EXPANSION** 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.

**BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS** We are continuing to make improvements to Awegys School buildings. Immediate projects include the plastering of exterior classroom walls and an improved ceiling for classrooms.

**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.

**SECURING STUDENT SPONSORS** With the need in Uganda as great as ever, our student population continues to grow as more families learn of the Mtaala Foundation's work. Connecting these needy students with sponsors around the globe is a central part of our work in Uganda.

**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).

## E-mail

[info@mtaala.org](mailto:info@mtaala.org)

## USA

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

## UGANDA

Mtaala Foundation  
P.O. Box 31434, Kampala, Uganda

## UK

Mtaala Foundation  
P.O. Box 67002, London UK  
Phone: 0044 7730 676824

## 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**