

TEN-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

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SPOTLIGHT ON A STUDENT

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AWEGYS SCHOOL CELEBRATES ITS TEN-YEAR ANNIVERSARY!

From a two-room home without electricity and running water, to a school campus that boasts a health clinic, library, science lab, and well that provides clean water —yes, that is progress. It’s progress easily measured by the bricks placed on top of one another, and the windows framed. It’s progress easily measured by the number of new desks acquired and the donated books lining shelves and informing minds. And now, it’s progress measured by a ten-year anniversary celebrating the founding of Awegys School and the current and former students whose lives have been changed by this small school in Kigo, Uganda.

It was at that anniversary celebration that I found myself this past July. I watched students dance and sing songs and perform original skits they had rehearsed late into the nights in their dorms: comedic skits about daily life and serious skits about the importance of education.



At Awegys School’s ten-year anniversary school founder, Alice Wegoye, recognizes current students for their educational achievements.

I witnessed the passing of responsibility from outgoing grade-level prefects to the newly elected students who would take their place. Prefects are older students who are elected to help and guide younger students. With great pride, each outgoing prefect removed a knotted neck tie from his or her shirt collar and placed it over the head and around the collar of the student who would take their place.

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Gretchen Seibert, an Mtaala board member, celebrates with a former student and Awegys graduate at the school’s ten-year anniversary.



A partial view of the new classroom block: board members survey the campus from the second floor.

THE CELEBRATION CONTINUES...

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A partial view of the Awegys campus from the new classroom building.

They and many other students received certificates highlighting their achievements in school. And I was deeply moved by the dedication and resilience of our students, many of whom come from abject poverty and traumatic backgrounds.

Yet these students and the school itself would not exist without the devotion and generosity of the school's founder, Alice Wegoye, Mtaala supporters and sponsors, and the local Ugandans who have brought the school to its present state. What particularly struck me this trip was the increased involvement from parents in the community. Many parents attended the celebration, including the leader of the PTA who is from Northern Uganda and an enthusiastic champion of Awegys School. He has seen firsthand the impact Awegys School has had on vulnerable children's lives.



A student led choral group performs at Awegys School's ten-year anniversary.

While counting new bricks laid and new curricular offerings to include O level, A level, and vocational training are easily measured, the less visible impacts of education are more difficult to assess— but even more important.

According to one of the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals, "Education is the key that will allow many other goals to be achieved. When people are able to get quality education they can break from the cycle of poverty. Education therefore helps to reduce inequalities and to reach gender equality. It also empowers people everywhere to live more healthy and sustainable lives. More than half of children that have not enrolled in school live in sub-Saharan Africa, which makes it the region with the largest number of out-of-school children in the world. Education reduces birth rates and hunger but increases a person's likelihood of finding employment.*

The U.N. adds, "Education is also crucial to fostering tolerance between people and contributes to more peaceful societies." **

Those tolerant and peaceful societies are built one brick, one desk, one lesson, one child at a time.

Written by Gretchen Seibert

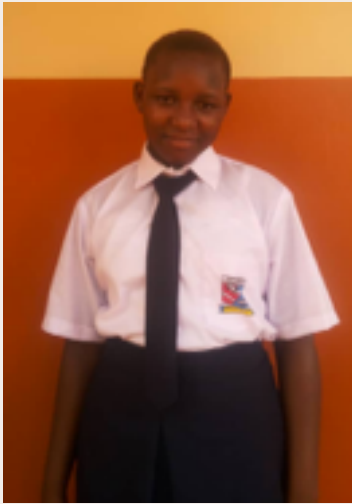


A student dons an American flag while performing a traditional dance during the ten-year celebration.

* en.unesco.org/gem-report/sites/gem-report/files/girls-factsheet-en.pdf

** <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>

SPOTLIGHT ON A STUDENT IN NEED OF A SPONSOR



NAME: Holiver Airiako

AGE: 15

GRADE: Senior Two

ABOUT: My name is Holiver Airiako. I was born on June 15, 2003. I am from a family of six children. My father died in 2005 when I was two-years-old. I live with my mother who is very sick with HIV/AIDS. She makes local brew to earn a living. My other four siblings didn't get a chance to finish school.

I would like to become a nurse in order to help my community. I hope to finish my secondary education and then join nursing school. I know I have to study hard and respect my teachers to achieve my goals. My favorite subjects in school are biology, agriculture, and chemistry. My most difficult subject is fine art because it is hard for me to draw. In my free time I like playing games, soccer, and volleyball. Thank you for your help.

AWEGYS GRADUATES GIVE BACK

In Uganda, O.B. (Old Boy) and O.G. (Old Girl) refer to the nicknames former students use for one another once they have graduated from secondary school. During Awegys's ten-year anniversary celebration, a number of O.B.s and O.G.s returned to Awegys to celebrate and thank Mtaala and Awegys for their support.

Among those students was Ali, an Awegys graduate and furniture maker. Using the vocational skills acquired during his sponsored education at Awegys, Ali has opened a small furniture shop. He also makes furniture for the school and hopes to teach basic carpentry to the students.

Also giving back was a former Awegys student, Mary, who has returned to Awegys as a cook and teacher of catering. She prepared a Ugandan sweet snack for us called "Daddies," a treat made of fried dough and sweetened with sugar. They are addictive, especially fresh from a pot of oil sizzling over a charcoal fire, which is how we enjoyed them.



Mary, an Awegys graduate and former sponsored student, now teaches catering at the school.



Former students return for Awegys ten-year reunion to celebrate, give testimony, and thanks.

During the celebration, a number of Awegys graduates provided testimony to the community about the support they received from Awegys School and Mtaala. Included among them was Sharifah, pictured far left in the above photo. After graduating with Mtaala's help, Sharifah went on to become a primary school teacher. She said, "Leading Community Reading Day every Saturday at Awegys School inspired me to become a teacher." Her friend Gertrude, another sponsored student, also went on to become a primary school teacher.

Phillips, who studied nursing after graduating from Awegys, worked for a government clinic. When he found out an orphanage needed a nurse, Phillips transferred to the orphanage, citing that his experience at Awegys School taught him to give back to the community.

Mtaala means learning in Swahili. What more valuable lesson could we hope to learn than the importance of giving to others in need?

THIS YEAR, WITH YOUR HELP, WE WILL CONTINUE TO...

As a small but ambitious organization, we appreciate it when our supporters lend a helping hand towards Mtaala projects. The following are some of our goals for this year...and beyond!

SECURE 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.

OUR NUMBER ONE CAPITAL PRIORITY IS TO RAISE FUNDS TO BUILD A SECOND STORY ON THE NEW CLASSROOM BUILDING

Originally built on a small piece of land donated by Awegys founder Alice Wegoye, we are maximizing use of the land we have by creating a new school building several stories high. The first floor is finished and holds classes, students, and staff. Funds are needed to build the second floor that will house additional classrooms and dormitories, and help fill Uganda's need for schools. Improving the school's infrastructure moves Awegys that much closer towards self-sustainability and independence.

SUPPORT THE FEST SCHOOL HEALTH CLINIC

The Mtaala-built and stocked school health clinic continues to serve our students and community. The clinic is always in need of supplies and funding for our staff. The clinic serves the students of Awegys and the surrounding villages.

SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY HOPE LIBRARY

The Mtaala-created Community Hope Library is the only kind in the area, so it provides essential literacy opportunities to our students and local children. The library is particularly in need of books for young children to support the Community Reading Program, a weekly event in which Awegys School Secondary students read to younger children in the community.

THANK YOU TO OUR EDUCATIONAL PARTNERS:

ANGUS LAWSON MEMORIAL TRUST * MKM FOUNDATION
ROSA INTERNATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

4 Reasons to Become an Educational Partner

1 Mtaala's program is unique

We work with your organization to set goals based on our school's needs and your organization's interest.

2 You get tangible results

The members of your organization will actually see the results of their dedication and generosity.

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 can help build relationships between your organization and our students in Uganda.

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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 is a partner with Awegys Secondary School in Uganda and connects the school's students with international sponsors to fund their educations.

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WWW.MTAALA.ORG

