



Learn to do good...Seek justice...Defend the orphan... Isaiah 1:17

April 2019

Buyamba News

Helping Uganda...one child at a time

EMPOWERING GENERATIONS 2019

On March 31, 2019, the Annual Buyamba Dinner took place at Woodranch Country Club in Simi Valley, CA. Two hundred longtime supporters and new friends, attended the dinner to hear more about this year's theme, *Empowering Generations*. Led by Craig Hardy, Master of Ceremonies, the speakers included Julie Dimas, Executive Director, Melissa Carlson, Communications Director, Ismail Mutawe, Alumni of God Cares Schools, Dan Ernest, long time sponsor, and Florence Dongo, founder of Buyamba Orphan Outreach and God Cares Schools.

Florence Dongo's Reflection

On October 19, 2019, we will be celebrating four years since our beloved friend Pastor Dongo went to be with the Lord. The Dongo family continues to grow stronger, thanks to our supporters and our friends' unceasing prayers. As I reflected on the theme of this year's dinner, *Empowering Generations*, I was reminded of how important the idea of empowerment is for the longevity of the ministry on both sides.

The future is so bright for Uganda, and it is our role to teach, guide, and mentor those coming after us so well that when our time is over, the work continues. Uganda Buyamba is and will always be about helping orphans and needy children by giving them love, hope, and a future through education and discipleship.

This life impacting ministry was started with Pastor Dongo and I when we were a poor couple in Kampala, Uganda who were trying to follow the Lord and seek His direction. After seeing the needy children around us, we had to trust in God with His vision to use us. Through sharing the vision, we have seen so many people come along to support through showing love to our kids, sharing smiles, and giving financial support and prayers. We are thankful to God for each person who has been involved in the Buyamba ministry. The support and generosity is the reason this God dream has become a reality... from the first school in the church basement with wooden walls to the five-story building raised up on top of a hill to be a light to the community. God Cares Schools are models of change, salt, light, and developmental growth in the communities they serve. We are educating the next generation of leaders, doctors, engineers, and many more Christian modeled professionals.

Right now, Buyamba Uganda is concentrating on building dormitories for our high school students to have spacious, self-contained accommodations. Many donors have been generous with giving towards this project. May God bless them for the work is in progress. We have begun, but we still have a long way to go, and we know that with your continued support and prayers, we shall be able to finish this much needed housing.

Know that I continue to pray and intercede for the Buyamba family on the US side, as you pray for the Buyamba family on the Uganda side. May the Lord bless America. Recently, I saw in prayer a multitude of pastors coming together in prayer, interceding for this nation, crying unto the Lord for revival as one voice. I believe He will carry this country on eagle's wings and protect you as a hen protects its little ones. I always have, and will continue, interceding for this great country.



Julie Dimas and Florence Dongo



Melissa Carlson's Testimony of Empowerment: The Next Generation

The theme of Empowering Generations has been on my heart since I was first introduced to Buyamba seven years ago. As many times as I've read and shared the vision of Buyamba, "to empower the orphaned and needy children of Uganda to impact their nation for Christ," the word "empower" has always stood out to me.

The word *empower* means, "to give someone the authority or power to do something" or "to make someone stronger and more confident."

After understanding this word better, I realized that I fell in love with Buyamba years ago because I experienced what it was to be empowered. Seven years ago, I was working in Santa Barbara, California, walking down State St. when I checked my phone to find out I had a missed phone call and a voicemail from a number I didn't recognize. I listened to the voicemail, and it was a message from a nice woman, Julie Dimas (Buyamba CEO) and she told me she's calling to follow up on my interest in going to Uganda.

Melissa Carlson & Ismail Mutawe

Right away I thought that this woman had the wrong number for I was not at all interested in going to Uganda. I didn't think I had time for that nor did I know what I could possibly offer to people in Uganda. I returned her phone call to politely inform her that she had the wrong number. We talked, and she insisted that I consider going to the first team meeting to learn more about the trip (for my cousin, unbeknownst to me, had asked if I could join the trip last minute). I ended up going to the first team meeting, just to be polite, and I found myself in a room full of strangers listening to them discuss the mission of this trip. Their purpose was to set up the first high school computer classroom at God Cares High School. Dozens of computers had just been donated since a new law in Uganda had been passed which required students to have computer skills to graduate. Little did anyone know that I was currently fixing and setting up computers as a living.

I remember leaving the meeting that night feeling like I had something to offer that really mattered. I was suddenly empowered to use a skill set I had ... to empower students in Uganda who were being set up to face the impossible - to graduate with computer skills when they had no access to computers.

At that point, I knew I was going to Uganda. I took my first trip in the summer of 2012 with a team of ten strangers who would turn out to be close friends to this day. It was my first time ever traveling out of the country, and I got to meet some of the most joy-filled children and young adults I had ever met. I got to set up computers while the students watched from outside the classrooms. Many of them had never seen a computer before, and I can remember they picked up the keyboards and began to play them like pianos. That trip was also the first time I ever shared my testimony. It was empowering. The whole experience made me "stronger and more confident" in my faith, in my abilities, and in my purpose.

That trip was all it took to get me hooked. I haven't looked back since. Now I am working full time with Buyamba, and I see my job as empowering people on this side of the world to work towards the vision of empowering students in Uganda. I know it's not me who does the work, for it's God who moves on people's hearts, but I get to affirm and encourage people when they answer the call to sponsor a child, or travel to Uganda. I have the joy of reminding people that yes, the need is GREAT, but we are all part of the solution. Each of us has the ability to empower another and the opportunity to be empowered.

See pictures and learn more about the event at UgandaBuyamba.com/events