

Home Visit Report, 2025

Introduction:

The mission of Hands of Love USA in partnership with HOLF - Children's Support Christian Foundation is to bring about transformation in Uganda by empowering the most at-risk children within our program mainly through education. Our goal is to nurture strong Christian leaders through sponsorship of these children, offering them educational opportunities that will allow them to achieve a brighter future, escape the cycle of poverty, and realize their potential in Christ. The foundation is instrumental in initiatives that address the educational needs of at-risk children and orphans. It enables these individuals to take charge of their futures and actively pursue new opportunities. Furthermore, the foundation strives to raise awareness about the rights and needs of vulnerable children, including campaigns dedicated to child protection. This holistic approach lays a robust foundation for establishing an effective, sustainable, and lifelong learning organization. Nevertheless, as we collaborate closely with the parents and guardians of the children, it becomes challenging to oversee the dynamics occurring within the different families we assist. Consequently, this establishes a foundation for our staff to conduct annual visits to each home from which the children originate, allowing for a deeper insight into various aspects of the children's lives at home and their relationships with their parents or guardians.

In the month of October and extending into the first week of November, our committed staff team had the opportunity to visit the families and communities of the sponsored children. We visited families in the areas of Mayuge in the Eastern Uganda; Kayunga district located in the Northeast of Kampala and the Kampala Metropolitan part. These visits provided us with valuable insights into the daily challenges faced by the families we support, as well as an understanding of the children's living conditions during their holiday breaks at home. We are grateful for the warm welcome we received from all the families, who were enthusiastic and willing to share their experiences with us at every level of our inquiries. We continued to recognize the vulnerability of these families and children and we received a thousand thanks for sponsorship from all families.

Purpose:

This year, our primary focus was on understanding the origins of the children, their living arrangements during holiday breaks, and the occupations of their parents or guardians. Additionally, we sought to learn about the monthly earnings of the parents or guardians from their daily work, the religious affiliations of the children, the baptism status of the sponsored children, and the types of lighting systems used in their homes. Furthermore, we were keen to understand the health conditions of the sponsored children, the educational levels of the parents or guardians, and whether the parents/guardians are aware of any behavioral changes in their children, as well as issues related to child protection and children's rights. All of this information is intended to enhance our ability to serve and mentor the children effectively, rather than making assumptions

about their individual circumstances. This also provides us with an opportunity to determine the best ways to support struggling children in all aspects of their lives while also encouraging those who excel to continue their commendable efforts.

Children, Regions & Families:

Hands of Love is presently supporting 212 children across various educational stages, including primary, senior school, vocational training, and university. In the Kayunga area, there are 38 sponsored children from 32 families, while Mayuge has 62 sponsored children from 50 families, and the Kampala metropolitan area has 112 sponsored children from 90 families. We were unable to visit 13 families from which 14 children originate. This is due to the fact that the parents or guardians of 1 family with 2 older children remain unknown to us, 9 families with 9 children were not present despite our follow-up visits, 2 families with 2 children were located too far from Kampala, and 1 family with 1 child was inaccessible. We therefore visited 160 families with 198 sponsored children out of 173 families that make up 212 sponsored children.

During our visits, we discovered that in the Kayunga area, there are 26 families, each having one sponsored child, and 6 families, each having two sponsored children. In Mayuge, we found 41 families, each with one sponsored child, 6 families, each with two sponsored children, and 3 families, each with three sponsored children. In the Kampala Metropolitan area, there are 76 families, each with one sponsored child, 11 families, each with two sponsored children, 3 families, each with three sponsored children, and 1 family with five sponsored children. Among the 212 sponsored children, there are 99 boys and 113 girls. Of the 99 boys, 21 are from Kayunga, 24 are from Mayuge, and 54 are from Kampala. Regarding the 113 girls, 17 are from Kayunga, 38 are from Mayuge, and 58 are from Kampala. Overall, there are more female sponsored children than male.

Children & Parents/Guardians:

We discovered that 56 children reside with both parents, 85 children are under the care of a single parent, 56 children are living with guardians and 1 child stays alone. Additionally, we found that 153 children have both parents alive, yet not all of them reside with their parents on a daily basis. Furthermore, 3 children have lost both parents, and 42 children have experienced the loss of one parent. The children who live with both parents are fortunate to receive love and nurturing from their biological parents, and their lives are not endangered for any reason. In contrast, children living with single parents encounter the challenge of insufficient balanced parental love and guidance. Some of these parents have separated due to marital issues, while others have sought employment far from their families, and unfortunately, some parents have passed away. These circumstances contribute to the significant number of children who are cared for by guardians.

The majority of parents and guardians are engaged in peasant farming and casual labor, with only a small number operating businesses that sufficiently enable them to support a few additional children in their education and other life necessities. Additionally, we discovered that among the 212 sponsored children, 124 have made the decision to follow Christ; however, 46 of these have yet to be baptized. This indicates that 88 children require continued preaching to accept Christ as their personal savior. All 124 children are affiliated with churches where they participate in fellowship, and they also engage in daily fellowship with their family members whenever they are at home.

From the families we visited, we discovered that 10 children faced challenges related to physical impairments, 5 children had hereditary health issues, and among those 5, 3 had not received any prior treatment. Additionally, we found that 44 children had a family history of mental health issues, 65 children had experienced trauma, and only 9 children had safety concerns at home. Furthermore, we learned that only 42 children receive academic support from their parents, guardians, or siblings in terms of homework assignments. We also found that 73 out of the 160 families utilize either solar power or candles for nighttime lighting, while the remaining families rely on metered electricity that is billed periodically.

Based on this information, it is likely that children with poor health conditions may experience negative effects on their academic performance due to ongoing health issues. Particularly, children who have faced traumatic experiences are often found to be leading difficult lives, necessitating close supervision and reassurance that God is mindful of their concerns. For parents who are illiterate and unable to assist their children with homework, the most effective support we can provide for academically struggling children from such backgrounds is to motivate them to be more intentional and focused on their studies in order to realize their aspirations. Children whose parents cannot afford metered electricity continue to face challenges with regular academic revisions at home due to inadequate lighting at night. In Uganda, during holiday breaks, children are expected to assist their parents with domestic chores, which primarily occurs during the daytime. Consequently, this presents a significant challenge for children living in homes without reliable lighting sources, hindering their ability to concentrate on academic revisions.

The overall behaviors and character development of all children appear to be very encouraging, as parents have reported observing significant transformations, particularly since the children began attending the partner schools. In terms of child protection knowledge, among the families we visited, 18 parents reported having no knowledge whatsoever, 70 parents indicated they possess some knowledge about child protection, 71 parents are knowledgeable, and 1 child could not be evaluated as he does not reside with his parents. Moreover, 82 parents lacked knowledge regarding children's rights, while 63 parents were aware of this issue, 14 parents had some knowledge, and 1 child could not be assessed in this area since he does not live with his parents.

General observations:

1. The overall living conditions for all families in the communities we serve are poor; however, individuals appear to have adapted to these distressing circumstances.
2. Both children and parents encounter significant health challenges, yet they seldom obtain adequate medical care due to financial constraints and the considerable distances that impede swift access to healthcare services.
3. Locating some parents proved somewhat difficult as they have relocated to new areas, which often suffer from inadequate communication networks.
4. A small number of families remain unreachable simply due to the considerable distances that require substantial fuel consumption and extended travel times to visit one family – for instance, a family located in the Arua district or Sheema district is approximately 459KM and 323KM away respectively, which entails an 8-hour /6-hour drive. Nevertheless, we are eager to commence visits to some of these families during next year's home visits, as we understand how special it feels to host visitors especially from afar. We particularly intend to visit the families of children who have faced ridicule in their local communities from their childhood, due to their physical appearance. Our aim is to cultivate hope among these parents; we seek to address the underlying social stigma that has long affected these children. We wish to reassure parents that these children are indeed precious gifts from God, possessing the potential for greatness, and that God has a significant plan for their lives.
5. Many households share sanitary facilities with their neighbors, particularly in the Eastern region, which poses a considerable risk of disease transmission, as the limited toilet facilities cannot support larger populations over extended periods.
6. There is a notable incidence of divorces and separations within families, driven by various factors, and each occurrence primarily impacts the children. Such separations and divorces leave children in uncertain situations, feeling helpless and unsure of their next steps. These circumstances have led to negative behaviors among children, as there is often no responsible adult available to guide them or provide a listening ear for proper advice. Domestic violence is indeed a significant factor contributing to the trauma experienced by children, which can sometimes result in erratic behavior.
7. However, it is heartening to note that all parents are genuinely enthusiastic about their children receiving a quality education, something that many of them did not have the opportunity to pursue. This instills hope that if their children achieve success through education, the families and communities will reap substantial benefits.
8. We have observed that the demand for educational sponsorship across all areas is an urgent necessity – we have faith that God will fulfill every need within each family.

Recommendations:

1. We should periodically organize workshops on Child Protection and Children' Rights for all parents/guardians.
2. There is need to organize parenting workshops to empower parents/guardians in proper child upbringing.
3. There is need to step up for the critically vulnerable children for extra academic needs and ill health conditions.
4. There is need to intentional evangelize those who have not made decisions for Christ.
5. There is need to teach the purpose of baptism to those who are not yet baptized.
6. There is need to do termly medical check-ups especially for HIV/AIDS and pregnancies young adults.
7. There is need to organize trauma healing trainings for both children and parents.
8. There is need to do annual dental screening for all children and if the provision is bigger, communities would benefit from this arrangement as well.
9. Provision of affordable lighting systems to some families to enable children with their reading.

Finally,

Uganda is eternally thankful for every support you give through the Hands of Love Foundation. We believe you may not completely grasp the profound impact that educating a vulnerable child in Uganda has with every donation you contribute. Please be assured that the hearts of these children are filled with gratitude, and their futures are being safeguarded. May God continually bless all the generous donors for the invaluable love you extend to the world.