

BACK-TO-SCHOOL INTERVENTION PROGRAM

Background:

Vessels of Honour is aware of the global impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the lives and livelihoods of many people. In various countries around the world, countless people were adversely affected despite interventions from governments and donors. In Uganda, the education sector was one of the most affected due to the prolonged closure of schools (the longest world over) which left learners at home for a period of two years.

Whereas the institutions of learning were eventually opened and learners at all levels allowed to attend physical school, majority of them were not able to report back to school because, among other factors, many parents were not able to pay school fees for all their children at the same time. This was due to prolonged closure of businesses during the lock down as well as loss of jobs/employment.

Scope:

Therefore, under our Back-to-School Post COVID intervention program, we identified a total number of 58 learners who qualified for our Pilot Scholarship Program. This program focused on vulnerable primary and secondary school learners in Kampala and nearby areas. The program pledged to fully cover school fees for the first term for all the selected learners and provide scholastic materials for a few of them who could not afford.

Progress:

Out of the 58 learners that were identified, we were able to pay school fees for first term for only 39 learners. These learners were from the following schools. (See details below)

Name of School	No. of Students
Kyajja Primary School	24
Ssezibwa Modern Primary School	5
Hiqma Junior School	2
Impact Secondary School	2
Nagojje Secondary School	6
Total Number of Students	39

A few learners also received books and school uniforms, along with the school fees.

Findings and Observations:

1. A total number of 18 learners did not receive their bursary due to our budget constraint. However, since we pledged our support to these parents, their bursaries were carried forward to cover their school fees second term which resumes on 9th May, 2022.
2. Kyajja Primary School is located in a deeply impoverished community where parents can hardly afford to pay school fees for the children, even in affordable government schools.

Whereas the Government of Uganda offers free education for all primary school learners in public schools under the Universal Primary Education (UPE) program, the learners in these schools have to contribute a certain amount of money to cater for porridge which is served as lunch for the children, among other costs that are determined by the schools' Boards of Governors.

Therefore, there is need for continued support for these parents so as to keep these children in school. Otherwise, our one-off bursary would go to waste since the children may not continue through the following terms. That is why we proposed a full termly scholarship to help these 24 children stay in school.

3. It was established that, whereas these learners spend the whole day at school, all they receive to eat is a cup of corn porridge without sugar. This implies that they study on an empty stomach which obviously has a negative bearing on their level of academic performance.
4. During our interactions with parents and home visits for some of the vulnerable children, we came across a one Dorothy who is a mother of 5. She has got no place to stay with her children since the father of her children abandoned them. At the time of our visit, we found their daily meal ready to be served and this, (see pictures here below), is what they had prepared to eat on that day. Two of her children, Kevin and Eriya who had dropped out of school are some of the learners that received a full scholarship for first term and we intend to keep them on the ongoing termly scholarship program. Apart from the intervention for their education, this family needs a place they can call home; with food, water, shelter and clothing which are the basic needs that even Jesus referred to as necessities.
5. We found a one Irene Nakandi who is an orphaned girl aged 15 and is currently in Senior Three. Irene had dropped out of school due to lack of school fees. She lost her father to suicide and her mother's whereabouts are unknown to her since she abandoned her. Apart from receiving a full school fees scholarship for first term, she received a new school uniform

as well as books and pens. Irene is now a beneficiary on our termly scholarship program.

Conclusion and proposed way forward:

1. There is a need to pay the school fees for the 18 learners who were on our proposed bursary list but did not receive their bursaries for first term. This money shall be paid to the various schools to cater for or second term 2022.
2. The 24 learners from Kyajja Primary School shall remain on our termly school fees scholarship scheme for as long as they stay in school.
3. We shall partner with Kyajja Primary School to provide at least one meal of food daily for all the children in the school, starting with second term.
4. We propose to find a house (Home) for Dorothy and her children; ultimately this will become our shelter for the homeless under our care, such as Irene and any other the Lord will draw to us.

**VESSELS OF HONOUR
MAY, 2022**