

Our Own Home

A refuge for orphans living with HIV/AIDS in Jinja, Uganda



Once upon a time...

www.africaourownhome.org

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Childhood, and especially infancy, is something we hold sacred. When a baby is on the way, we celebrate with a shower, and fix up a cozy, safe nursery full of softness. We rock them to sleep, sing them songs, and wake at all hours of the night when we hear them cry. Teethers and teddy bears -- these are our images of baby-hood. For some, cradles and lullabies are a dream at best. Survival is the pressing concern, and no means is too extreme. Fear replaces security, and though a baby shower would be welcome, it doesn't happen. This month I want to share with you two stories of survival -- two children who almost didn't survive.

Gloria -- Her husband died in a car accident, but not before infecting her with HIV/AIDS. Left without a job or home, and with a baby on the way, the young woman didn't know what to do. She lived in a room built crudely of mud and sticks -- a nightmare when it rained, and in Uganda, it rains hard.



Along came Gloria, a beautiful baby girl. Born to a starving mother, laid on the dirt ground to sleep...survival was hard enough for one, but now there was a baby. The desperate mother nursed the baby until she ran dry from malnourishment, but even when she had milk, it wasn't enough. She didn't know that the same milk that was keeping her baby alive was transmitting "silimu", AIDS, to her child. Finally, she could see no other option. The baby was hungry and so was she. There was no job and no help and no food. It would be easier if there was only one again. **She carried little Gloria into a 20-foot pit latrine. She was about to drop the baby into the latrine to die, when a neighbor rushed in and caught her.** Begging her to think again, the neighbor took the young mother to a local social service agency, who provided milk for the baby, at least. Then the agency put her in touch with Our Own Home.

We welcomed little Gloria as our second baby about a month ago. She has started ARV treatment for her AIDS, and her health has improved greatly. When she came, she was on malaria treatment for the second consecutive week, and had already received one blood transfusion at the local children's hospital (the mother snuck out of the hospital without paying for the treatment). **Today, Gloria is full of smiles, and feeds heartily on formula and baby food.** Hardly a moment passes by, except when she's napping, that she isn't being cuddled by her big "sisters" or "mamas" or volunteers. So for one of Uganda's little ones, security at last replaces fear.

Pius -- She lived in a mud house similar to Gloria's, only this one has five graves behind it. Her husband and four of her six children. Now in her sixties with her two remaining sons grown, she gets by on the produce of her garden, with help from a kind neighbor. One son is in the military, she hardly sees him. The other disappeared years ago, she doesn't know where he is or what he does, though she has her suspicions. One day the prodigal returned, but only long enough to leave a sick baby and no information about where it came from. Her first grandchild. Pius. Then her son vanished again. **Pius was sick so she took him to a nearby charity clinic. He had malaria, pneumonia, and AIDS. The grandmother wept. "Now I'm going to lose another son!"** She knew if the baby was sick, his father must be. The people who ran the clinic gave her cow's milk to feed the baby, but he wouldn't drink. She gave him the malaria medicine, but he stayed sick. What else could she do? She loved her grandchild, and she wanted him to have the best care. She knew she couldn't give that to him. So she asked the people at the clinic for help. They brought her and the child to Our Own Home.



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Because of dehydration, Pius threw up everything he ate or drank. He spent a week at the children's hospital, being rehydrated and treated with an antibiotic for his pneumonia. A chest x-ray revealed that Pius also suffered from TB. We thank God for bringing him to one of the few homes in Uganda who have access to the treatment for TB. He began treatment this week. **Though he is not out of the woods yet, little Pius is in a place where he has all the love and medicine and food he needs.** His appetite has picked up since the dehydration was treated. There is hope.

The Father to The Fatherless -- "The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the LORD will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them." Isaiah 41:17

"My eyes fail from weeping, I am in torment within...because children and infants faint in the streets of the city...as their lives ebb away in their mother's arms." Lamentations 2, from verses 11 and 12

"A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families..." Psalm 68:5-6a

These are only a few of the Scriptures that make it clear -- God loves orphans. He cares about children and protects them. Jesus even said that little children are the greatest in the kingdom of God. He is the reason that Our Own Home exists. He is the ultimate Relief Worker, readily giving even His own life for the sake of our redemption. The children of Our Own Home know this to be true. They daily sing out heart-felt praises to God. I am particularly moved by the words of one of their favorite songs: "I called, You answered, and You came to my rescue and I want to be where You are!"

Their Hero, the Father to the fatherless, came to their rescue through Our Own Home. Thanks for your prayers, they are daily being answered in the lives of these children and infants.

Be Blessed,

Mommy Holly

Thank you for your donations toward a second van! We still have a ways to go and we greatly appreciate your prayerful consideration whether you can make a directed donation for the van at this time.

Our present needs are for deodorant for our teens, bathing suits (4T-14/16, no bikinis, 2-pieces or European style please,) Purel, personal size Vaseline, multivitamins, children's Tylenol and Advil tablets. Of course, generics are fine for any of these items.

Please share this work with your church or others you know who may be interested. Let us know if you would like to arrange a presentation for your group or church. Send an e-mail to your friends with the link to Our Own Home's website.

If you would like to make a donation, please make checks payable to **Our Own Home** and send to: 1075 Beaumont Dr. Casper, WY 82601. We also accept credit card and Paypal donations online at www.africaourownhome.org. Donations are tax deductible as permitted by law. If you have any questions at all, please call Joe at 307-267-2712 or write joe@africaourownhome.org.

Please visit our website at www.africaourownhome.org! Here you'll find an overview of our ministry, pictures, our newsletter archive, volunteer, contact and donor information. Please share and e-mail this link to anyone who might be interested in learning more about Our Own Home!

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