

# THE GIRL CHILD WAS LEFT AT HOME

Women make up fifty one percent of the Ugandan population and the majority of women are illiterate and living in poverty. Why is there this illiteracy among adult women? Rose Ekitwe, of the Baptist Union of Uganda, explains the problem, "The average family size in Uganda is ten people with a low income. The women, who are central to the family group, grew up in a time when there was no universal primary education. (this was brought in by the Ugandan government using UK government aid in 1997) Many boys had an elementary education and some excelled to reach higher education. On the other hand the girl child was left at home to look after the home and be married off at 18 years old or sometimes even earlier. There was also polygamy which impacted the women and their role. In the past families had cattle as a source of food and income, but these have been lost over time due to natural causes.

The Baptist Union of Uganda Women's Section, headed by Rose, has produced a programme to uplift women by providing an opportunity for them to read and write. This will raise their self-image and their confidence in their communities. The purpose of the programme is to empower the less privileged and disadvantaged women with skills and education to improve their quality of life. If successful, it has potential for these women to transform their families and communities.



What does this mean in practice? In January 2006 a six month literacy course will be launched in Masindi District. **Twenty women will be taught to read and write and how to be literacy trainers. After six months they will begin to train others.** The training is more holistic because, included alongside the literacy skills will be elements on preventative health care, income generating activities and confidence building.

Monitoring, evaluation and follow-up will continue after the initial module. The first course is planned for Masindi District in the north west of Uganda. The second in Mbale District in the east of Uganda. **At the end of 2006 these 40 trainers could reach and benefit 2,000 women within two years. When you consider the effect of an empowered woman in a family group of ten it is easy to see that this simple program will influence the lives of 20,000.** If these two initial courses succeed and there is funding, the project could extend to five more districts in 2007. The Baptist Union of Uganda has a network covering sixty districts in eight regions of the country. The BUU is a solid organisation with a network at grass roots level and natural on-going support structure for the trainers. Even a partial success of this programme will be worthwhile, but much can be expected once begun.



How much will it cost? Afrinspire and the Baptist Union of Uganda have put in a small amount of seed funding but more is needed. Each six month module to train twenty trainers will cost 2,815,000 Ugandan Shillings (sterling £900). A total of £1,800 is needed for the first year. Follow-up funds will be needed to support the forty trainers as they extend to the two thousand women. Rose has the ability and leadership skills to organise such a project and **we invite you to be involved from the start in something which will advance and assist many women and their families around them.**

This project arose from the expression of the needs of women in Uganda at a fringe meeting at the Baptist World Alliance Congress in Birmingham UK, where Rose and several other Ugandan women were delegates of the Baptist Church of Uganda.



*The full project proposal is available on request and any questions are welcome. We invite your interest and involvement. Above all, donations of any size will help launch this programme. Please consider giving a regular gift.*

**VOLUNTEER BEGINS** Afrinspire has partnered with VSO Uganda and the Foundation of People with Disabilities, to enable a volunteer to begin work in early December. An agreement was signed in November for Afrinspire to provide the in-country funding costs of the volunteer. The objective is to assess the status of FPD and provide a strategy plan to strengthen the organisation for the future. This will be a seven month placement and may be followed by a further 2 year volunteer placement. There will be much interest in the findings, with a potential benefit for the few thousand disabled people in the Kabale area. Afrinspire needs further partners in this endeavour, particularly to take it into the next phase.

## LONDON GROUP

The first Afrinspire Support Group Meeting in London took place in October, when the retired Bishop Jerome Bamunoba from Mbarara joined the group to bring news about Kent Foundation College. We heard about the Antokia Childrens Charity from Barbara and Ian Bradford (see [www.antokia.org.uk](http://www.antokia.org.uk)) and we appreciated the excellent venue and hospitality provided by our London based trustee.

*Interested in future London meetings? Tell us and we'll make sure you get an invitation.*