

# Abaana News

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**Bringing Hope to the  
Children of Africa**

Charity No: NIC102174

# New Life Choir: A Journey of Transformation and Hope

## Reflecting on Seven Years of the New Life Choir

By Scott Baxter



2024 marked a milestone with Abaana, completing our third New Life Choir tour. A total of 60 children from partner projects in Uganda have now travelled to sing and share God's love in churches across the UK and Ireland. I first get to meet these children halfway through the training when everything is still new and exciting. From this point, watching them grow in confidence, develop their English, and build lasting friendships over the tour is one of the most rewarding experiences.

## The Lasting Impact on Families and Communities

When the choir returns home, we always like to understand how they are adjusting. On my recent trip to Uganda, I visited several families to learn firsthand about the children's transition. Though there are challenges, such as adjusting to simpler food, it's clear that their tour experience has left a positive, lasting impact. To ease this transition, we provide food parcels to help families in those first few weeks.



Scott visiting with one of the choir families

Each child's return is a cause for joy and pride for the whole family. One father shared: "Our family was known as a family of rejects. Even growing up, my father rejected me. I cannot believe now that my own child got on a plane and went to the UK. God is so amazing, and He is blessing us so much. When I leave my son at school, I am so proud because it is a school for rich people."

His story is a testament to the renewed hope and self-respect that the New Life Choir brings to these families.

## Growing Young Leaders through the Choir

Seven years on, the oldest choir members from Choirs 1 and 2 have grown into young adults, many of them now aged 17 or older. I met some of these young men and women together for dinner to hear their reflections and insights on the tour and how they are doing in school. They are emerging leaders in their communities, churches, and schools, and they carry a level of respect thanks to their choir experience. They expressed how the choir tour positively shaped them, instilling in them a drive to give back to their communities and even mentor the younger choir members. Many also shared about the positive impact the choir had in their personal faith in God.

Even for these children, returning to life in rural Uganda had challenges. One young man shared a story about how he tried to make tea but used poor quality water and contracted typhoid. Despite such bumps in the road, the children wouldn't trade their choir experience for anything. They feel blessed to have been part of something so impactful, with experiences and memories they cherish deeply.

Hearing these stories has reinforced the profound value of the New Life Choir program. It's inspiring to see the long-lasting impact—from increased confidence and leadership skills to the hope and pride instilled in parents who once faced unimaginable challenges.

## Wider Impact of the Tour

Each choir tour has also helped Abaana find new sponsors, not only for the children in the choir, but also their friends and families back home. A very rough estimate shows that over the first five years, each choir will bring in over £800,000 in funds to sponsor children, thanks to those who signed up to sponsor.

In December 2023, we took a bold step of faith to rescue 20 boys from the streets, with no guarantee of sponsorship. Today, thanks to the choir, we have secured sponsors to support these boys and are now considering if we can rescue more children in 2025.

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who helps make the choir a reality—from the trainers and staff in Uganda, to the chaperones who give their time to tour, and the churches and schools who host us.

Thank you to everyone who supports Abaana and the New Life Choir. Your contributions continue to create a brighter future for these children, their families, and their communities.

**New Life Choir 2027 - Our next choir tour is planned for 2027. Do you think you could be a chaperone? Register your interest here: [www.abaana.org/chaperone](http://www.abaana.org/chaperone)**





# Building Brighter Futures: How Education is Transforming Lives in Uganda



Uganda, often referred to as the Pearl of Africa, boasts breathtaking landscapes, from lush rainforests and misty mountains to vast savannahs and serene lakes. The people are warm and welcoming, and few things brighten your heart more than a group of Ugandan children giggling and smiling.

Yet, these smiles and beautiful scenery can sometimes conceal the significant poverty challenges Uganda faces, with 40% of the population living below the international poverty line of \$2.15 per day.

Education offers a promising pathway out of poverty, yet access remains unequal. While most children attend primary school, only about a quarter advance to secondary school, with enrolment rates for the wealthiest five times higher than for the poorest. Additionally, only half of primary students reach the expected level in reading and math, highlighting gaps in educational quality.

Education is a powerful tool against poverty. By equipping individuals with essential skills and knowledge, it opens doors to better job opportunities, fosters healthier communities, and empowers future generations to break the cycle of poverty. Each child who gains access to quality schooling creates a ripple effect—benefiting families, strengthening communities, and promoting economic growth. Investing in education is investing in a future where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.



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In Uganda, many children attend classes in non-permanent structures, including under trees. Many schools we visit have classes with hundreds of children sitting on the ground, either on mud or grass, with a blackboard leaning against a tree.

Building and improving schools, particularly in the most rural areas, can increase enrolment, enhance learning outcomes, and equip Ugandan children with the skills essential for employment, ultimately helping to break the cycle of poverty for future generations.

To date, Abaana has built 145 classrooms providing education for over 6,500 children in Uganda and has made significant improvements over the last 18 months, including:

- **Completing two nursery school blocks, providing access to a total of 300 children at:**
  - Prince of Peace Nursery
  - Rainey Nursery
- **Enhancing hygiene and sanitation with the addition of 5 toilet facilities at St. Mary's Primary School.**
- **Providing teacher accommodation at Tekoo Primary School.**



Prince of Peace Nursery

## 2025 Projects

One of the schools we recently built is St. Mary's Primary. The classrooms look wonderful, but only some of the children have desks. In 2025, we hope to raise £5,000 to ensure that every child can sit at a proper desk.



Kadoki Primary School

We're thrilled that, thanks to donations from the choir, we have raised around £50,000 towards building Kadoki Primary School. We still need an additional £30,000 to complete all seven primary classrooms, and we're hopeful that construction on this new school will begin in 2025.

If you think you can help with any of these projects, please contact us at [info@abaana.org](mailto:info@abaana.org) or see our website [www.abaana.org](http://www.abaana.org).



# Creating Story Changers: The Transformative Power of Sponsorship



One of the joys we have in Abaana is reading the stories of those children who have progressed through our sponsorship scheme to the point where they are no longer in need of sponsorship. This is because their sponsorship has come to a conclusion and they are now able to earn their own income. Such achievements are truly story changing.

## From Sponsorship to Success: George's Journey of Hope and Gratitude

George's story is a heartwarming journey from a sponsored child to an independent young man, filled with appreciation for the support that helped him transform his life. Now 20, George recently completed his time in the programme and reflects on how the support of Abaana and his sponsors, Alan and the late Cindy, shaped his future.

"Abaana has been there for me from Primary School, meeting my school needs and personal needs," George shared. "My sponsor even bought me clothes, which made me feel special. When I needed a life-saving operation that my mother couldn't afford, Abaana covered my medical bills, giving me hope when I thought it was lost."

Although academics were a challenge, George pursued vocational training and became a mechanic, allowing him to earn a living and support his mother. Abaana's gift of essential tools for his work as a mechanic has further empowered him, giving him confidence in his new career.

Alan, who took over George's sponsorship after Cindy's passing, expressed his pride, saying, "It has been a pleasure to sponsor George. I know both Cindy and I are so grateful for his success and his support for his mother. I know Cindy will be smiling down on him as he steps into the world as a mechanic. We hope and pray for a successful and safe world/life for him and his family."

George's journey exemplifies the profound impact that sponsorship can have, showing how compassionate support can change lives, build futures, and create lasting bonds across continents.



Alan and Cindy

## From Struggles to Strength: Samuel's Journey with Abaana Sponsorship

Samuel joined Abaana's sponsorship program in 2007 when he was just seven years old. Now, at 24, he has completed his time in the programme and recently visited the Abaana team in Uganda to say his goodbyes.

Reflecting on his journey, Samuel shared "I am incredibly thankful for everything Abaana has done for me. I often sit and wonder how God led Abaana to find me and my mother during such difficult times. Life was extremely hard - having no home and struggling to find food made each day a challenge. But now, thanks to Abaana, these struggles are behind me.

"I am so grateful to feel empowered today, able to support my mother, and to know that she's proud of me. With the skills I gained in construction, I look forward to building my own home. Knowing my school fees were always covered gave me the motivation to work hard and focus on my studies. Words might not fully capture my gratitude, but I am genuinely thankful that Abaana has been there for me every step of the way. Today, I am proud of the person I've become."

Samuel's story is a testament to the transformative power of sponsorship and the enduring impact it can have on a young person's life, enabling them to overcome obstacles and build a brighter future.

If you would like to be a 'story changer' then you can read more about sponsorship here - and see some of the children that are currently awaiting a sponsor to help change their story - [abaana.org/sponsorship](http://abaana.org/sponsorship)





# Christmas Gift Appeal



Changa

Every Christmas we seek to bring thousands of smiles to thousands of children and their families through our Christmas Gift appeal. This year's appeal is already underway, but we thought you might like to see how last year's appeal impacted some of the sponsored children to whom we were able to give gifts.

"I'm very happy for my sponsors who love me so much and gave me and my family Christmas gifts. I will share the gifts with my family members at home and they will be happy too. I have learned to share the little I have with other people because gifts bring a smile on the ones receiving and I believe they are such a blessing." Changa - New Life Homes



Anna Grace

"I feel so special and loved! My joy is so great, it is a special thing to have someone who loves you and thinks about sharing such a wonderful gift with you. The gifts I received today are very useful, especially for my school life. I am also going to share some with my family members so that we all share the joy and have this special moment together. I say thank you to my sponsor for loving me and caring about me." Anna Grace



"I am excited to receive these gifts from my God-given friend abroad. Staying with a single mother and my many siblings is so challenging and sometimes she cannot give us all we need. I am happy we have got jelly, sugar, salt and soap. These are all very useful in our daily lives, but sometimes our mother cannot

provide them at the time we need them. Life is better not only for me, but for my entire family members. The God we serve and pray to every day is a faithful one. At least I will be able to wash my clothes regularly and my body will be clean. Thank you, my sponsor, for caring about me." Sara

You can still give to this year's scheme to help bring a smile to your sponsored child if you have not already done so (and thank you if you have). Please use the QR code or go to [Abaana.org/Christmas](http://Abaana.org/Christmas) to find out more.

Thank you.

## The Power of a Personal Gift

Giving a personal gift to a child living in poverty can have a profound impact, far beyond the material value of the gift itself. It can spark feelings of belonging and self-worth, boosting their confidence. They are reminded that there is potential for a brighter future. Here are some recent personal gifts:



Sara



Gloria with some new shoes



Morris received a sheep



Deborah received a mattress and other items



Ashraf with a laptop

To find out more about our Personal Gift scheme please either contact the office on 02891 451918 or use this QR code.





# The Transformative Impact of New Life Homes



The New Life Homes is a refuge for vulnerable boys, offering safety, stability, and hope. Through education and care, these children now have the chance to thrive. Celebrate their journeys and the impact of New Life Homes as we work toward brighter futures, one child at a time.



Gerald when he first joined New Life Homes

## Graduation Success!

We're so proud to see so many of our boys become valued, contributing citizens of Uganda! The transforming stories of the lives of these young men is a powerful reminder of how a small spark of hope can ignite a bright future. Thank you to their sponsors who believed in them.

## From Chapati Dreams to a University Degree

At just 13, Gerald was alone on the streets, with only whispers of hope from other kids like him. "If you go to street school, they give you chapati," they said. Driven by hunger and the hope of a meal, Gerald took a chance, not knowing that this small step would change his life forever.

Homeless and hungry, Gerald's days of surviving on the streets were over the moment he walked through the doors of New Life Homes. More than a meal, he found a home and a future. With shelter, support, and people who believed in him, he seized every opportunity, eager not only to fill his stomach but to fill his mind.

Gerald's determination paid off as he excelled in his studies, completing his A-levels with impressive marks and eventually earning a place at Makerere University. Today, he holds a bachelor's degree in Adult and Community Education, a symbol of his hard work and resilience.



Gerald at his graduation

Reflecting on his journey, Gerald says, "I want to work with organisations like Abaana to give back the love and care I've received. When I was a street child, people saw me as a thief, but I've proven I can contribute something meaningful to my country. God has made me a vessel, and I have everything through Him."

## Passion to Purpose

Since arriving at New Life Homes in 2007, Israel's deep passion for helping others quickly became evident. Today, we proudly celebrate his remarkable achievement of earning a bachelor's degree in Youth Development Work. This milestone reflects his dedication and drive to create positive change, especially for the young people around him.

Israel discovered a hidden talent for painting and decorating—a passion he hadn't previously explored. This discovery sparked a new direction in his life, inspiring him to start his own painting company, with a mission that goes beyond business.

Israel explains, "My goal is to empower my fellow youth by shifting their mindset, showing them they have every reason to believe in their own abilities. I want them to see that the odds aren't as slim as they might think. With the right guidance and support, they can transform what feels impossible into something great for the future."



Israel when he first joined New Life Homes



Israel at his graduation

## Another 21 Boys Rescued

We are thrilled to share the inspiring news that 21 more boys have found safety and support in New Life Homes this past year. Thanks to the support of the New Life Choir tour, these boys now have the chance to live as children—free from the fears of life on the streets, including abuse, hunger, and lack of shelter, medical care, or education. Instead, they are welcomed into an environment filled with love, joy, peace, security, and the promise of a brighter future.

You can support the New Life Homes in three ways:

- Support the New Life Homes from £5 a month
- Provide a professional counselling session for £30
- Sponsor a child for £26 a month

Please join us in this life-changing mission. To contribute, please visit [abaana.org/donate](http://abaana.org/donate) or reach out to [louise@abaana.org](mailto:louise@abaana.org) to set up a regular donation.

Together, we can help these children thrive.





# Hope and Opportunity Through Abaana Teams

Transform your worldview as you seek to learn more about life in Uganda. Abaana teams draw alongside school children and their families to support the aims of Abaana. Teams can help construct school classrooms, work with the pupils and participate in outreach with children on the streets. A trip to Uganda with Abaana can transform lives.

We are delighted to partner with Ballyclare Presbyterian Church over the last two decades, and to send them to Uganda again in 2024. Gillian Moxen gives her account of the journey.

## A Mission of Love from Ballyclare Presbyterian in Uganda



"I was privileged to be part of a team travelling to Uganda in July 2024 with members of my church family in Ballyclare Presbyterian. We were well prepared with training, but I suppose the actual experience was beyond what any of us expected.

When we were in Ayila Primary, I led music sessions with the school children. What joy it brought not only to them, but to us as well to hear them giggling and enjoying the percussion instruments we had brought them. Their listening skills were amazing. They quickly learned by watching and copying me—reminding me that actions speak louder than words.

Ruth, (my daughter who was also on the team), sponsors a child who attends Ayila Primary. We met Gifty, her mother and granny. They were so thankful for the help given for Gifty's education. It's just a small amount each month, but it makes such a difference to this child. Not all her siblings get to go to school and that was hard for us to take in. How do you choose which child can get an education? That must be a hard decision to make as a parent. We can't wait now to receive her letters to tell us how she is getting on.

In Kampala, we visited the Street Reach Programme and New Life Homes, which deeply impacted all of us. To see firsthand the young boys, some as young as eight years old, living on the street and trying to survive. We told them a bible story, played games with them and helped to serve lunch.



Gillian and Ruth with Gifty, her mother and grandmother

For many of them, this would be their only meal that day. I watched one boy divide up what he had received so he could eat some there and keep some for later. We then travelled to the New Life Homes and saw what a transformation there was in the boys who had been on the street when they were helped by staff from Abaana. The boys were so excited to see us and showed us their home and where they slept and had their meals. Their faces were happy, they were fed, loved and safe. God encouraged me to look to sponsor one of these boys and I have been able to do that now. We are so blessed by what God gives us on a daily basis. It seems so little that we give in return, but God uses this through Abaana and the work that is carried out in God's name for these boys."



**We invite you to join one of our dynamic teams, reaching out to hundreds of children in Abaana-built schools and those living on the streets.**

**To bring a team from your church, school or workplace to Uganda, visit [abaana.org/teams](http://abaana.org/teams) or contact [louise@abaana.org](mailto:louise@abaana.org)**



Ballyclare Presbyterian Team at New Life Homes



# Zuri Girl Classes



## Empowering girls to reach their full potential

The Zuri project is an initiative that addresses menstrual hygiene and sexual health for pupils in upper primary school. This year, nine of our primary schools received a 6-week education programme focusing on self-esteem, sexual purity and menstruation care for girls. We were delighted to be able to expand the programme to include our northern schools for the first time. The programme is coupled with the inclusion of making sanitary towels where girls and boys are afforded the opportunity to learn the skill of sewing.

The participation of boys is seen as a vital way to increase the chances of girls staying in school by lowering teen pregnancy and the stigma attached to periods.

Through the Zuri programme, Esther bravely shared her story. She confessed that she did not know about puberty and all that it entails and recounts the shock she had when she first started her period. Esther didn't know what was happening to her. It happened unexpectedly while she was in class. All her classmates leapt to their feet as the bell signaled home time, but Esther remained seated until everyone left. She felt such shame.

Boys at Coo-rom Bangor Grammar Primary



Now, through Zuri classes, Esther has gained knowledge and confidence about her menstrual cycle. She no longer sees her period as something to be ashamed of, but instead as something she can manage with pride and understanding. She's committed to teaching other girls in her community how to sew their own sanitary towels and to always be prepared.

Suma's story is so similar. She recalls one incident last year when she got her period at school. She didn't realise she was due so when she stood up her classmates noticed her uniform was stained. The children's response left her in tears and caused her to dread her period. However, Zuri classes at her school changed her perspective. She understands that menstruation is a normal, healthy part of life and is determined to educate others on how wrong it is to mock girls. Thanks to the Zuri programme, Suma can now confidently track her menstrual cycle and be prepared with her home-made sanitary towels.

Over 300 children received the training this year and almost 500 dignity packs were given out which provide underwear and reusable sanitary pads. Across the board, at the nine schools, girls reported an improved knowledge on predicting when their cycle will start, how to manage period pain and 100% of girls now know what sanitary products are safe and available to use.

Next year we want to do more. Although we expanded to our northern schools this year, our dream is that every pupil should participate in this programme. To achieve this, we need to raise £17,000. If you would like to support our Zuri Girl project, please contact Louise at [louise@abaana.org](mailto:louise@abaana.org) or visit the website [abaana.org/ZuriGirl](http://abaana.org/ZuriGirl)

Girls at Tekoo Primary School





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