

# SPECIAL REPORT

## ABANDONED CHILDREN



JULY 2020

# REAL LIFE

## THE FACE OF POVERTY

### KIDS ABANDONED

We were recently alerted to a serious issue affecting a number of children in our community. Children were being abandoned by their parents.

In each case we examined, the father had left the family and the mother was struggling to make enough to provide food and shelter for the children. The rent was behind and the landlords were getting very close to evicting the families.

As eviction day drew close the mother faced a terrible decision. Can she stay and struggle through the situation, or should she abandon her children in the hope that a neighbour would have pity on the children and take them in.

This scenario plays out across Uganda and perhaps across the continent daily. While it is tempting to assume the mother is a bad person that is often not correct. These mothers have struggled and with no social safety nets and no family support they can become overwhelmed and hopeless.

Terry and I have now come face to face with this level of poverty and are getting to know a number of children between the ages of 3 and 15 who are facing life in a slum without a parent.



# THE BOYS

## ABANDONED BUT STILL TOGETHER

### THE CHILDREN

These four boys have been on their own for 4 months now. From left to right they are Nelly (15), Nigel (7), Neasta (9) and Nicholas (11). The boys were evicted from their home after their parents abandoned them. The boys salvaged what they could carry from their home and started life on the street. In a third-world slum, this is not a safe or healthy life. The boys are hungry every day!



### SHELTER

With no funds to rent even a simple shelter, the boys found compassion in the landlord of a small building made from sticks and tin sheets. This landlord allowed the boys temporary access to the suite upstairs from the small video shop. Each night the boys climb the rickety ladder into the small room above the shop. Here they can sleep without being wet.





# THE BOYS

## WHAT LIES AHEAD?



### SHORT-TERM

In the very short term, the boys can stay where they are. A young lady running a food stand called “The Food Hub” across the street has been helping them with scraps and we have now arranged for the boys to receive 2 meals each day at her restaurant. It is hoped that we can trace the family before the landlord evicts the boys and the team is looking for cheap accommodations for them in that event.



### THE FUTURE

We are working with locals to trace members of the family. The best case scenario for the boys is that they can travel to their family village and stay with an uncle or grand parent. As this 15 year old boy Nelly considers his future as a parent to his younger siblings, our team is working hard to find food, shelter, and family.

# THE LITTLE ONES

## TOO YOUNG TO BE ON THEIR OWN



### THE CHILDREN

These four small children were left in their rented room when the mother abandoned them a few months ago. The landlord tells us she is owed rent for the past 6 months and must evict the children almost immediately. The landlord will keep everything in the home to recover some of the rent money she is owed. From left to right their names are Collins (4), Tendo (6), Nicole (7) and Smamyiya (9).

### SHORT-TERM

We are negotiating another months rent on this small room. While small, it is dry and secure for the children. The landlord is easily able to watch over the safety of this room as it's right next to her home . A community leader is being asked to provide daily food for the children if we provide the supplies. As the leader lives right across the street and is feeding her family too, this will not be an onerous task for her.

# THE LITTLE ONES

## WHAT NEXT?

### FAMILY TRACING

We are now working on contacting extended family who may be willing to take these little ones in. It's hoped that a Jajja (a grand parent) or an aunt or uncle can be located and will accept the children. We would then travel with the kids to their village and be sure they were settled into their new home. Life in the village will be safer for the kids and offer the family better options for feeding themselves. Grand parents are often willing to accept the children.





# PREVENTION

## SPOTTING THE PROBLEM BEFORE ABANDONMENT



### THE SITUATION

This family was brought to my attention on Saturday. They are 4 months behind in their rent and were to be evicted Sunday. The landlord would not allow them to remove anything from the house because of the rental arrears. The mother has been begging for scraps from restaurants in order to feed her children but is at the end of her rope. This scenario is what precedes child abandonment.

### THE SOLUTION

After speaking with this lady, she was able to identify a brother in her home village and felt he would help her get established there again. We are currently negotiating with the landlord through community leaders and have funded transportation to get this family at risk back to the village. It is far less costly to intervene at this stage than to have to mend the lives of abandoned children!

# GUIDING PRINCIPLE

## FOR LIFE



### LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR

Living at the edge of a slum community offers many opportunities to reach out and in the words of Gandhi ...

**“be the change we want to  
see in this world”**

Terry and I have wrestled with the correct response to this situation and others like it. We can't take in every child that has an issue. On the other hand, we can't see hungry children living on the streets of a slum and just walk past. As always ...

**“we will do what we can,  
with what we have,  
where we are”**

And by the way, If you are feeling compelled to engage with this situation also, we welcome your partnership.