



**Spirit
In
Action**

Micro Grants
Major Change

Fall & Winter Newsletter 2022

Spirit in Action

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Dressed for Success

25 women learn sewing and tailoring skills in Malawi

While women in Malawi often wear t-shirts and skirts to do their daily work, they like to get dressed in traditional colorful clothes for church and social occasions. This year, there is a new dress shop in the Salima market! Graduates from Reach Girls' tailoring and sewing training program have set up a shop where women can get tailor-made dresses and students can get school uniforms.

Reach Girls, a SIA Grant Partner since 2020, is run by Malawian women who want to help younger women achieve financial independence. In the past two years, Girls Reach has trained 25 women in sewing and business management. After six months of learning, the new tailors recruited ten more girls to train for free as part of the project's Sharing the Gift agreement.



Above: Fatina Heli, a single mother, is one of the new business leaders, trained by Reach Girls.

Below: Thokozani Sola sews on one of the treadle sewing machines, provided by a SIA Grant.

The organization works with local schools to identify young mothers who would benefit from the training program. Malawi has a policy that requires pregnant students to withdraw from school. Though mothers can return to school after their baby is born, this rarely happens. Childcare needs and stigma (teasing by students and teachers) often keep the girls from returning to their studies. Reach Girls' mission is to give these new mothers opportunities to gain skills and provide them with a space for camaraderie with peers who may be facing similar challenges.

Read our blog for success stories, photos, and inspiration!

<http://spiritinaction.org/news>

Building Trust through the Grant Process

Collaboration across the continents

SIA has used a collaborative process for our grant decision-making for the last three years. Rather than have only people in North America make decisions about the organizations and projects we fund, we now work hand in hand with SIA's African Advisory Board.

The five African Advisory Board Members are current and former grantees who are long-time collaborators with SIA. They also know the situation in the countries

where we work and can visit potential partners before and after a grant is awarded. This provides on-the-ground due-diligence and facilitates greater connection between and among local organizations.

The African Advisory Board uses a rubric - which they helped develop - to assess each application. Some indicators include how the project fits with SIA values, and whether it has a broad leadership base and focuses on empowerment rather than dependency.

This shared decision-making process is part of SIA's move toward Trust-Based Philanthropy, which aligns our governance structure and practices with our values of justice, cooperation, and inclusion. It also helps us move away from traditional philanthropy's paternalistic and colonial trappings and toward more authentic partnerships with grassroots leaders.



"African NGOs are good stewards in advancing solutions to African humanitarian crises once given the right platform for meaningful participation."

- Naomi Ayot Oyaro, SIA African Advisory Board Member and Chairperson for the Uganda Charter for Change Working Group

"Compassion is a vital concern"

By Del Anderson, SIA Founder, at age 94, (2000)

Our part and responsibility are to open ourselves to chart a way for our Inner Splendor to come forth into the visible. Jesus said, "I come that you may have life and life more abundantly." Letting God be God illuminates each of us. And those who have eyes to see and hearts to receive are more aware of their Inner Splendor.

Life is growth, and growth is change. We learn from reviewing the past if we review with a desire and willingness to change. Our responsibility is to keep our minds and hearts always open for more and new larger perspectives and visions. Thus, there is always the promise of new life.

Our part is to respect and appreciate differences, yet always work to transcend them in an ever-expanding consciousness. **Growth requires us to be good listeners.**

As we develop an open mind and heart attitude to listen to each other, we enlarge our desire, will, and ability to listen to God.

Inclusion of all, with compassion and social justice, is ever a vital concern for making the Kingdom of God visible on earth. This awareness and Inner-guided-vital-caring-concern needs to be ever-present.

Let us remember the one constancy of life is change. This doesn't mean abandoning or discarding the imperishable truths, yet God's unfolding process requires us to be aware that there is always more and higher atonement with Spirit. To renew is to change, and changing brings more life and more growth in Spirit, Truth, and Reality. This is a personal and together process. "God is with us, who can be against us."

Entrepreneurial Manyamula Village

SIA Small Business Fund Grants support families in Malawi



Five more Malawian families received \$250 grants from the Spirit in Action Small Business Fund (SBF) this year! With the grant, SIA also offers business training and a local mentor (see the box below to meet our newest SBF coordinator, Winkley Mahowe).

Fellen (pictured left) used her SBF grant to expand her goat rearing business. **One of her new goats recently gave birth to two female goats.** Fellen is already reinvesting by buying more goats, and saving some of her profit in the village banks to be able to build a home for her family.



Fancy Nkhoma (pictured right) used her grant to **pay for a sewing vocational training program** and to buy material to get her business started. She is pictured sewing a dress for a customer.



Joshua started his Fish Farm (see fish pictured left) with a SBF grant in 2020. Joshua and his sons dug a pond and filled it with fingerlings. They were able to weather the challenges of the pandemic and they are now an inspiration in the community. **Last year, the business generated over \$975** and they have dug an additional pond to expand their fish farm. Their fish also adds to the variety of protein available in the inland village.

In the news...

In June, the Federal Reserve Bank of Malawi **devalued the Malawi Kwacha by 25%**, to the current rate of 1,013 Kwacha to the US dollar.

The move was in reaction to foreign currency shortages and declining revenue from tobacco, Malawi's major export.

Imported commodities will now cost much more for our grant partners and their communities.

Welcome, Winkley!

The sudden death of our dear colleague Canaan Gondwe last October left SIA with a hole in our Malawian team. This year, Winkley Mahowe has graciously stepped up to lead the Manyamula COMSIP Cooperative and the Small Business Fund program in Manyamula, Malawi.

Winkley holds a bachelor's degree in theology and worked for World Vision for nine years as a Community Change Agent. He accompanied the SIA visitors during our trips to Manyamula, interpreting between Tumbuka and English. His organizing skills and kind manner are welcome additions to the SIA team!



Food Deliveries in Kenya

As inflation rises and climate change impacts weather and rain patterns, food security – access to sufficient and nutritious food – is the number one priority for many of Spirit in Action's grant partners.

Our partners are working with people who can be significantly affected by even small price increases, so the doubling of prices for basic commodities like beans and corn in Kenya has a big impact. Even in good times, it is not unusual for Kenyans to spend roughly half of their household income on food. "Many families in these areas are sleeping hungry for even two or three days," reports Margaret Ikiara, Director of Community Initiatives for Rural Development (CIFORD Kenya).

This summer, Spirit in Action and Amistad International joined forces to help CIFORD Kenya distribute much-needed food relief to hungry families in Meru Country. With the SIA Emergency Food grant, CIFORD bought corn, beans, rice, cooking oil, and salt to share with 150 families. **"This is a project which looks small but has a great impact on the lives of the community members,"** assures Margaret.

Like CIFORD Kenya, Tai Community-Based Organization is also deeply connected to the community where it works. This means that people come to them when they are in need. It also means they can distribute food quickly and efficiently compared to large food-relief organizations. Tai CBO also received SIA support to provide emergency food supplies in July. **They prioritized families who are caregivers to orphans** and delivered food to 36 families.

Tai CBO Director, Jonathan Hamisi, shares his gratitude: "We are extremely proud of the quick response by Spirit in Action to get food to these vulnerable families during an extremely critical time of their lives. **Now that they have food, they have space and strength to ponder ways of moving towards providing for themselves in the long-term.**"



Above: Families joyfully receive food basics like maize flour and oil from Tai Community-Based Org.

Left: CIFORD Kenya distributed food to rural families whose crops didn't get enough rainfall this year.

Support food security today with a tax-deductible donation online!
Set up your one-time or recurring donation at <http://spiritinaction.org/donate>
SIA is a 501(c)(3), tax-exempt, charitable foundation. Tax ID# 93-1207351.

Baking with Fred! Zoom Event

Saturday, October 22nd @ 10am PT / 12pm CT / 1pm ET

Join SIA Grant Partner Fred Kiserem on Saturday, October 22 on Zoom as he teaches how to **make Kenyan mandazi donuts!** Fred is a professional baker and leader of Kiserem Epilepsy Foundation in Kenya. This will be **a time of connection and playful learning with a SIA Grant Partner!**

Registration is required. For more details and to register for this free event visit: www.spiritinaction.org/donuts



SIA Partners in Action

Community Impact

1. Oil Flowing! Mercy Zimba catches the sunflower oil as it comes out of the filter at the Manyamula COMSIP Cooperative's oil operation in Malawi. One quart of oil sells for \$2.65. Cooperative members all grow sunflowers on their farms and collectively process and market the oil to get a better return on investment.



2. Sharing Goats The Great Lakes Peace Center in Uganda supports families who were displaced after recurring flooding in the area of Bulembya. Great Lakes provided **25 families with goats** to jumpstart their mental well-being and recovery. "The activity has increased the spirit of togetherness... and has helped them to become more innovative," shares Faruku, GLPC Director.



3. Increasing Access to Education

New SIA Partner Circle of Specialized Educators, Friend of the Disabled Person (CESAPH) in Burundi has created a learning lab where blind students can use specialized computers and iPads to listen to their school books. CESAPH trained both teachers and students on how to use the equipment. "The result is that the **blind students now feel more included** and excited about education."



4. New Cohort at the Home of Hope Congratulations to CAP AIDS Uganda for brining a **new cohort of 20 girls** to their Home of Hope program! The girls come from precarious home situations to this safe space for healing and skills training. Classes in tailoring, baking, and poultry rearing begin soon. We are excited to hear about the next steps in their journey!

5. Kenyan Honey

With a SIA Grant, Ndekanga Support Self-Help

Group hosted a training and gave beehives to eight women with HIV/AIDS in the south of Kenya. **Last month, they harvested a collective 465 lbs of honey**, which they sold to a local cooperative for over \$1,000! With the proceeds they bought hives for three new members.



See a full list of our grants and amazing partners:
www.spiritinaction.org/current-grant-partners

Men for Women's Empowerment

ULA brings men into the work of gender equity



36 men have attended ULA's "Men for Women's Empowerment" workshops so far this year.

Many of SIA's grant partners focus on fighting for women's rights in the community. Their programs help women gain financial independence, and get access to health information and education. Yet, Universal Love Alliance (ULA) in Uganda and other grant partners have begun to notice that it is not enough to bring awareness, support, and opportunity to women without changing the habits and practices of the men in their families.

"We conducted a study in 2020, and found that for women's rights and empowerment to succeed, there needed to be an end to violence against women," says Turinawe Samson, Director of ULA. "For that, we needed to target the men committing this violence."

This year, ULA hosted a series of workshops to talk to men about moving from a patriarchal mindset toward a mindset that centers on justice, equality, caring, and empathy for women in the household. So far, they have held workshops for fourteen older men with histories of domestic violence and for twenty-two young men who are students at the local university.

Over the course of the discussions, Samson found that the young men were quick to grasp the range of topics and to question some of the cultural beliefs around gender and hierarchy. "These young people love their mothers and sisters just like any other young person does. The vulnerability of seeing their fathers abuse their mothers makes them feel compassion for women, and they want to help to stop violence against women."

By the end of the workshop, some men felt safe enough to talk about their own experiences of hurting women or witnessing violence in their homes. After the ULA workshop, some of the young men have agreed to continue meeting with ULA leaders to discuss how they can support the women in their lives. This work helps with the overall impact of improving lives for women in Uganda.

A Spirit in Action grant funds the administration costs of Universal Love Alliance so that its staff has adequate support to run their impactful programs.

SIA Visits Uganda this November!

On November 12th, I (Tanya Cothran), and North American Board President, Kathleen King, will head to Uganda for a two-week trip. We will visit each of the five communities where SIA Grant Partners work, meeting with local leaders and seeing the impact of their work in the community. These visits are mutually beneficial, **deepening the understanding and trust between grant-giver and program implementor.**

I've been studying the Luganda language for a year now and I'm looking forward to saying "Nsanyuse okukulaba" (good to see you) to all my friends there!



Thank you to our generous supporters!

We gratefully acknowledge those who have contributed to SIA from May 4 - September 1, 2022.

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Support for Elders in Uganda

A testimony from Nabunju Ritah

I am elder Nabunju Ritah [pictured here], I lead the elderly group of Kakuuto Development Initiative (KADI-U). We are grateful to KADI-U and SIA for supporting our savings and loans group, which has helped us pay school fees for our children and grandchildren, alongside **improving our nutrition at home**. The savings boost from our donors (SIA) has improved our loans portfolio and creditworthiness and increased interest profit.

We have 81 members in our group. Some of our members have gotten sick since the start of COVID-19. Some have even died, like elder Namusisi Joyce, elder Anne-Maria Nakanjako, elder Esteri, elder Baziluri Teresa, and others.



We also have elderly who are bedridden and need a lot of support.

KADI-U put us together to form these groups where we get to know each other's welfare. **If one of us misses for some time, we make follow-up checks on the member** and support the person in some way that we can manage. Sometimes we give them sugar, soap, or food so that the person feels better. If the person is sick, we collect some little money and take the person to the clinic for medical attention.

We have developed our livelihoods by working with KADI to start farming beans and soya. We have helped very much the most vulnerable elderly group members by **Sharing the Gift of some of our produce**. Now that we are farming soya, we enjoy a very nutritious porridge.



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Tanya Cothran, Executive Director

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