



Spirit
In
Action

Micro Grants
Major Change

Fall & Winter Newsletter 2023

Spirit in Action

Del Anderson, Founder

Tanya Cothran, Exec. Director

Elizabeth Stanley, Admin

info@spiritinaction.org

www.spiritinaction.org

www.facebook.com/spiritinaction

Instagram [@spiritinactionintl](https://www.instagram.com/spiritinactionintl)

North American Board of Directors

Diane Bush (Vice President)

Greg Coleman

Johnann Johnson

Kathleen King (President)

Tawanda Mutasah

Amber Picou-Broadnax

Terry Silverthorn (Treasurer)

Becky Sutherland

Danny Thomas

African Advisory Board

Naomi Ayot Oyaro (Uganda)

Mwibutsawineza

Ndagijimanayiburundi

(Burundi & Rwanda)

Dennis Kurgat (West Kenya)

Margaret Ikiara (Central Kenya)

Wambui Nguyo (Nairobi Kenya)

Volunteer Angels

Andie Bronstad

Sarah Bronstad

Karen Richmond

Donna Thomas

Helping Refugees Settle and Thrive

FMV establishes a piggery project in Rwanda

“Refugees are not just a liability. We have a lot we can contribute,” says Ferdinand Ndayiragije, a Burundian refugee living in Rwanda. **“Even as a refugee, you can still do humanitarian work.”** The work of **SIA Partner Forum pour la Mémoire Vigilante (FMV)** proves this. Through a SIA Grant **29 refugee families**, representing about 120 people, are establishing economic stability in their lives.

Before they left Burundi, they were professionals - teachers, business people, and other civil servants. In Rwanda, they can't use their Burundian degrees, and refugees are not allowed to own land. “We're tired of feeling vulnerable all the time,” they told me during my visit in July. **Here is a photo from my visit.**



In the last few months, things are starting to change with the implementation of their piggery project. **FMV has built modern pig pens, with a cement floor and trough for catching the urine to use for fertilizer.** They purchased three female pigs, and **one has given birth to five piglets!**



The other two pigs have had time with the male and hopefully will give birth before the end of the year. Each piglet represents a good source of income, and the piggery project is a collective activity that brings members together.

Support SIA today with a tax-deductible donation online.

Set up your one-time or recurring donation at www.spiritinaction.org/donate

SIA is a 501(c)(3), tax-exempt, charitable foundation. Tax ID# 93-1207351.

Thinking about “the other” in a complex way

Employing a justice lens to Spirit in Action

Whenever I’m with African Advisory Board (AAB) Member Naomi Ayot Oyaro, I gain new insight into **how to see Spirit in Action’s work through a justice lens rather than a charity lens.** Charity sets up a power dynamic where some people are seen as generous, selfless givers, and others as receivers, takers, and needy.

When we met with Reach Girls in Malawi in July, Naomi told them that local, grassroots organizations like theirs were exactly what SIA wanted to fund because, she said, **“SIA is working to get money into the hands of people who deserve it.”**

Deserve, not need. It is such a powerful rephrasing and reframing. These girls, all teenage mothers experiencing so many disadvantages, **deserve access to training** and an opportunity to create a career for themselves and provide for their children. (See page 6.)



Naomi Ayot Oyaro, SIA African Advisory Board Member from Uganda (left), pictured with Alice Tembo, on Alice’s farm in Malawi.

Dr. Tawanda Mutasah, who recently joined the SIA North American Board, employs a similar justice lens. In his talk to the Inspire Dialogue Foundation, he encouraged people to **“not underestimate the importance of training our minds to think about “the other” in a complex way.”**

It can be easy to be giving and compassionate towards someone different than we are when all is well, but what does it look like to see them as deserving of human rights in a moment of competition for resources?

“There is nothing called the other,” said Dr. Tawanda, “and there is nothing called the stranger. Through the human rights canon and through training our minds to be able to see fairly into the eyes of the next human beings, we are able to change the world.”

Building authentic partnerships with SIA Grant Partners, meeting them in their communities, and **seeing them as deserving rather than as needy, we are doing this transformative work of training our minds to adopt a justice lens.**

“On Transcendent Love”

By Barbara Deal, June 4, 2019

This deep knowing about the love I am giving and receiving in Uganda is something that has happened to me from time to time over the years, most often when walking through situations of great need.

The heart is opened in such a way that the self melts away and only Love remains. Nearly impossible to put into words, because it is of another dimension, another realm, to which our words can only point.

On this trip it has thus far been the norm, rather than an occasional breakthrough. I

suspect it may be one of the potential gifts of age, so much less attachment to self, one’s own wants and needs – as Glenn [Clark] said, **to empty self of self – and it is simply Love that rushes in to fill the emptiness,** and to touch the hearts, meet the need of the one who stands before you.

It may be part of having the Mind of Christ, though it seems to manifest as Love, not as a noun, but as a verb... The veil of self and other melts away, and **there is only the Oneness, only Love, only the Transcendent Presence...**

SIA Partners in Action

Community Impact



1

1. Welcome to the AAB, Margaret!

We're very excited to welcome Margaret Ikiara to our African Advisory Board, advising on central Kenya. Margaret, who is Executive Director of Community Initiatives for Rural Development (CIFORD), has dedicated her career to addressing the challenges faced by rural communities, including poverty, food insecurity, gender inequality, and lack of access to essential services. She brings many skills to the SIA team!



2

2. Visiting Sam's Shop.

Sam Nkosi opened his shop in Manyamula, Malawi with a \$250 grant from the SIA Small Business Fund. When I visited him in July, Sam told me that his competitive advantage is buying items like baking soda and salt in large bags and repackaging them into small amounts that customers can buy for that day.



4

3. Next level products.

These beautiful bags are produced by the newly-trained seamstresses at Transformers Mathare. This workshop, gives new opportunities to women living in the Mathare informal settlement in Nairobi, Kenya.



3



6

4. Good pig! Valerie Nahindorye pets the face of the pig she received as a member of the Tubunganire Women (see page 4). She has heart-trouble and the income from the pig will help pay for her medication.

5. Sharing the Gift in Mwhiko, Kenya.

As their final exam, women with epilepsy who received cosmetology training from Kiserem Epilepsy Foundation offered free hair, make up, and nails services to community members!

6. Winter Cropping. These two women are part of the Manyamula cohort that received seeds and fertilizer to plant a second crop of maize. This will help their families stave off hunger this year!



5

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

Tubunganire Women in Burundi

“Help those who are helping themselves” through village savings and loans



The Tubunganire Women is a collective of ten savings and loans groups, for a total of about 300 members, in rural Ryansoro, Burundi. Before the savings groups were established, the women would have to go to a neighbor to ask to borrow money, and it could be hard to collect the amount needed. **A SIA Grant last year boosted the Tubunganire loan capital** so that each group has a bigger pot from which to borrow.



In July, I saw the process of their weekly meeting. Of all the years SIA has been partnering with savings and loans groups, this was the first time I saw one in action!

In July, I visited the women and observed their savings group meeting. They each have an ID number and sit in that order each week (see them seated in a circle above).

First, they collect savings, with most women giving the equivalent of \$0.50. For the second round, they contribute any amount they've earned from helping each other on their farms. Finally, they collect for the “rainy day fund,” which is shared with members when they're in a crisis. Each amount was double-counted and marked in their record book.

Read the full story on our blog!
<http://spiritinaction.org/news>

Next, members are able to request a loan. They don't have to give a reason, which **gives the borrower a level of privacy and dignity**. The women pay a small interest rate, which is collected monthly for as long as the funds are borrowed.

In the news...

Burundi is in the midst of a fuel crisis, which has been going on for years with no end in sight.

I saw cars waiting in long lines not knowing if they will be served or not. The pumps might run dry before they get to the front of the line, or the station might not even be supplied with fuel that day. Currently, a gallon of gas is \$5.33. Prices on the black market are three times that.

The high cost of transportation is driving up the cost of food, which could lead to higher food insecurity in the “hungry season” at the end of the year.



Manasé, local coordinator of Flaming Chalice International, was lucky enough to find fuel for our day doing errands around Bujumbura, Burundi.

Jereni, a Tubunganire leader, shared how the group helped her when her husband fell sick. She was able to borrow to pay the hospital deposit, which is something that never would've been possible before the group.

When Jereni's husband died, she could borrow again to pay to bring his body home for burial. Being able to borrow quickly and easily meant that she could process the illness and death of her husband **without the added stress of trying to borrow funds from neighbors**.

Removing Barriers in Burundi

Supporting students with disabilities

“Hello. My name is Emiline Nshimirmana.” Emiline said, reading the words she had written in braille, using a punch form. Last year, a SIA Grant helped Circle of Specialized Educators, Friends of People with Disabilities (CESAPH) **purchase braille printing machines and tablets** so blind students can fully participate in classes. **Emiline is one of the 42 blind students at the inclusive school in Burundi**, which welcomes students of all abilities.

SIA African Advisory Board Member Mwibutsawineza Ndagijimanayiburundi and SIA Executive Director Tanya Cothran visited the school in July. The classroom was filled with spiral-bound notebooks, which are part of helping the blind students in their studies. Teachers give their lesson materials to the Specialized Educators, who then print off the notes in braille using the new machines. Without these machines, students had a hard time following the lessons and studying for exams. In the past, this even kept them from progressing to the next grade level.



Above: Emiline punches braille using a plastic template. **Below:** Tanya is interviewed for Radio Burundi about the work to support students with disabilities. Mwibutsa stands by to translate her words into French & Kirundi.



This year, CESAPH hosted a talent show where students with disabilities showcased their singing and comedy skills. The goal was to show the world how capable these students are. **Peaceful Pacific, one of the blind students, won the contest with his singing!** As Peaceful sang for Tanya and Mwibutsa, a journalist for Radio Burundi heard the singing and came to see what was happening. He interviewed Tanya, Peaceful, and Cedrick (one of the CESAPH volunteers) about their work and advocacy for students with disabilities in the schools!

SIA Partners are Passionate Volunteers!

In addition to the work that Charité Sans Frontières (CSF) does to help rural families breed pigs (as part of their SIA grant), they also are passionate about promoting volunteerism in Burundi. They encourage students, unemployed people, and civil servants to volunteer in their communities, and they are working with United Nations Development Programme and the government of Burundi to build up a strong network of volunteers. During the COVID pandemic in 2020, CSF volunteers served with leper communities, hospitals, and children with severe disabilities.

The CSF staff are all volunteers, and they met while studying social work at Hope Africa University in Bujumbura, Burundi. In 2020, they officially formed CSF.



Tanya and Mwibutsa visit the CSF team in their office in Bujumbura, Burundi in July. She was their first international visitor!

Reach Girls

Young mothers gain financial independence in Malawi



Menia, one of the peer leaders of Reach Girls, shows me how she uses the treadle sewing machine.

The day I was scheduled to visit Reach Girls in July was also the day of the funeral for one of the village headmen. “Some of the girls related to him will attend the burial,” explained Tiba Zimba, my host and dedicated leader of Reach Girls. Trip planning is always a lesson in flexibility, and working within the current reality!

African Advisory Board Member Naomi Ayot Oyaro and I arrived at the small fishing village of Maganga and met Tiba just before the funeral procession started. We stood to the side of the road and observed until they had passed before continuing our greetings.

Over the past two years, Reach Girls has **used SIA grants for their tailoring program, training 25 young women** and providing a welcoming space for them to borrow sewing machines and earn money. Currently, they have four machines, which are in constant use.

The women are all young mothers who have found renewed hope and financial independence due to the training. **“Things are different now,” Menia told us.** “Before, I was roaming around without a purpose.” She stopped

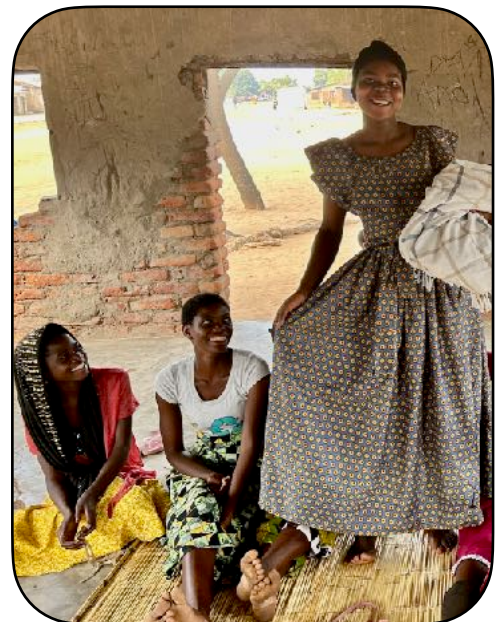
going to school when she had her child at sixteen. “As of now, I can meet my basic needs, buy soap, and make clothes for myself and my son.”

“This program has changed my life and the lives of others,” said Emma, who is one of the students and also the treasurer for the savings group that the women have started. After any tailor sells an outfit, they contribute 10% to the general fund to maintain their sewing machines.

Inez, a young woman of 20 years old, always wanted to become a tailor, but she never had the money to start. She was so excited to join the Reach Girls program to gain sewing skills and access sewing machines. “Basic needs are not a problem for me,” she said with a mix of shyness and pride. **“I was able to drink tea with sugar this morning.”** The room erupted in applause, honoring Inez’s accomplishment.

Tiba has formed good relationships with the local village headmen to identify the most vulnerable girls in the area for the program. She also works with the Area Development Committee, a government organization tasked with improving the community, which houses the sewing machines in their secure office.

Not content to keep the transformation to themselves, **the girls have already Shared the Gift by making fourteen school uniforms and giving them out for free** to help keep other kids in school. They also get together and have sewing bees to make menstrual pads for girls still in school. This is truly the spirit of love and the ripple of SIA in action! Jennifer, a teacher from the local school, was so delighted with the work of Reach Girls. “I am so happy,” said Jennifer during our gathering. **“I’m speechless to share my gratitude. I want to dance, but there is a funeral!”**



Lusungu, 23 years old, shows us the dress that she sewed for herself, after receiving training from Reach Girls.

Thank you to our generous supporters!

We gratefully acknowledge those who have contributed to SIA from May 13 to September 5, 2023.

Monthly Donors

Tim & Kathleen Arner
Fran Arner-Costello
John & Tish Bayer
Jan Burnett
Tina Cherry
Wendy & Hank Fusco
Diana Halpenny
David Hodges
Dennis & Marsha Johnson
Johnann Johnson
Carole Jones-Grassl
Mary Jordan
Sig & Beth Knapstad
Anne Littlefield - **Honoring Barbara Deal**
Tina Martin - **Honoring Dennis & Marsha Johnson**
Beth Miller
Charly Morgan
Scott and Elizabeth Peterson
Amber Picou-Broadnax - **Honoring Virginia Cheatham**
Debra Picou
Ed & Pilar Ruddell
Molly Shaw - **Honoring Tanya Cothran**
Wendy & Terry Silverthorn
Teresa Smith - **Honoring Chuck Smith**
Becky Sutherland
Warren & Ilene Teeters
Barbara Thomas - **Honoring Jim Thomas**
RuthAnn Wessman

Anonymous (x2)
Moni & Jerry Alter
Amistad International
Bob & Louise Biggs
Ron & Camilla Bixler
Callan Brown
Diane Bush
Peter & Tara Campbell
Richard & Roberta Corson
Tanya Cothran
Woody & Susan Covington
Lucy & Bill Crain
Trudy Denney
Ethan & Sara Eldridge
Marion Franck & Bob Lew
Diane Frary & Jonathan Swett
Katherine & Thomas Fritschi
George Furniss & Sandy Larson
Bob & Marlyn Hawkins
Kathy & Tom Hecht
Lesle-Ann Hine
Gary & Karil Israel
Marilyn Kendrick
Pat Leake
Dianne & Pete McCluer
Thomas Miyoko & William Shoaf
Marta & Marc Narlesky
Erik & Kirsten Nielsen
Jean & Norm Reynolds
Lynn Savage
Dickson & Steve Schwarzbach
Kathryn Song
Sylvia Sperry
Ron & Kay Thompson

John & Margaret Werminski
Melvin Wuest
Steve Wyer

GIFTS HONORING OTHERS

Honoring Maggie Arner & Larry Falk
Catherine Martin
Honoring Tanya Cothran
Connie Hegeman
Winnie McDonagh
Honoring Barbara Deal
Diane Williams
Honoring Marsha & Dennis Johnson
Linda Groobin



Numa Nyirenda and her baby in Manyamula, Malawi

Yes! I want to support justice in the world with a gift to Spirit in Action.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Please send my donation receipt by email _____

___ \$25 ___ \$100

___ \$50 ___ \$150

___ \$65 ___ other

I would like my gift to remain anonymous _____

I make my gift in honor / memory of:

I would like to **pledge a monthly gift** of \$ _____

I would like info about including SIA in my will _____

I would like to receive periodic emails from SIA _____

Please mail your contribution to:

Spirit in Action * PO Box 3384 * Santa Cruz CA 95063

Donate online!

www.spiritinaction.org/donate

Rabbit Breeding Research

APDEI leading the way in Burundi

Throughout my time in Burundi, I heard that the government has been encouraging families to raise rabbits, goats, and chickens to improve economic stability. **These small animals are good because a family will not think twice about selling one when they need a little money.** A mature rabbit can bring in \$7-10 to pay for school fees or a medical bill in short order. A larger animal, like a cow, might only be sold when needed for a dowry or a very special occasion.

Taking up the call, SIA Partner **Association pour la Protection et la Promotion des Droits à l'Éducation des Indigents (APDEI)** has started a rabbit research center. Through training and modeling, APDEI members -



Bernard Nsabimana, a recently retired teacher, is one of the volunteer leaders of APDEI in central Burundi.

mostly rural families - learn about **avoiding inbreeding, keeping pregnant and baby rabbits warm, and saving urine** and droppings for garden manure.

In July, I visited two APDEI rabbit hutches, and **saw their (adorable) 47 rabbits.** Since then, 10 rabbits have had healthy babies!

APDEI has a veterinarian who volunteers to teach members about keeping the rabbits healthy. For example, we stepped in lime disinfectant as we entered the hutches, so as not to bring in germs.

In September, APDEI has planned a training for the women who will receive a rabbit of their own, and the gift **includes a commitment to supporting their peers in the future** as a way of Sharing the Gift!



FALL & WINTER 2023 NEWSLETTER

Tanya Cothran, Executive Director

PO Box 3384

Santa Cruz, CA 95063

Support refugees in eastern Africa with a donation to SIA today: www.spiritinaction.org/donate