



**Spirit
In
Action**

Micro Grants
Major Change

Spring & Summer Newsletter 2020

Spirit in Action

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Stepping Up in a Time of Crisis



Fifty Women of Change leaders in Kenya received a SIA grant to buy soap-making materials. They gave away the soap as a way of Sharing the Gift.

Greetings from my home in Toronto, to wherever you are in this time of global pandemic. In the midst of grief, struggle, and uncertainty, I am also finding silver linings. For one thing, I'm celebrating our very strong partnerships in Eastern Africa. Spirit in Action has been working with grassroots organizations in Africa for 24 years now, and we have a passionate team that truly embodies spirit in action.

Faced with lockdown orders that closed marketplaces and caused other business interruptions, our grassroots partners immediately began thinking

about those in their communities who are most vulnerable, such as the elderly, LGBTI people, and single mothers. In addition to concerns about the actual virus, so many people in SIA's circle depend on selling items to buy that day's food, and so they are at a high risk of hunger.

While SIA usually gives grants for longer-term projects, **we knew this was a time to spring into action rather than delay.** The African Advisory Board Members from Kenya, Malawi, and Uganda have been meeting regularly with Tanya on Zoom (pictured right) to talk about how to show up for grassroots organizations. These groups are on the frontlines of community survival and support.

In March and April, **SIA sent a total of \$10,000**, reaching twelve different communities in Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, and Rwanda. Over 1,500 people received critical items such as soap, flour, rice, and corn. (**Read more** about this relief on page 3 and the back page.)



**The opposite
of poverty isn't
wealth.**

**The opposite of
poverty is justice.**

- Bryan Stevenson

SIA Board: Thank Yous and Welcomes!

We are moving into uncharted territory with the SIA Board! **Maggie Arner**, who was part of Spirit in Action before we even became an organization in 1996, is retiring from the SIA Board. For the past 24 years, she has served on the Board - as Vice President, and then as Treasurer for six years. We will certainly miss her presence, questions, and passion. Thank you, Maggie!

We also want to thank Board Member **Barbara Farley** who served from 2012-2019. Thank you for sharing all your expertise to get our board organized!

We are so pleased to welcome three new Board Members! I asked each what they are excited about after attending their first meeting in April:

Dan Lewis: I'm excited about all the new relationships with the African Advisory Board!

RuthAnn Wessman: I'm excited by how much good can be done with what we would view (in the USA) as a relatively small amount of resources (money). I'm also inspired by the concept of Sharing the Gift (paying it forward, playing it forward, praying it forward)!

Johnann Johnson: I'm filled with joy to see the African Advisory Board find effective ways to support their communities in this new time. To see how the businesses and organizations are reaching out to those who are vulnerable to bring them peace and help them thrive through love and good works is inspiring and exciting.



Spirit in Action North American Board of Directors:
Top: Terry and Wendy Silverthorn, Tanya Cothran, RuthAnn Wessman. **Middle:** Diana Halpenny, Kathleen King, Johnann Johnson. **Bottom:** Diane Bush, Dan Lewis, Maggie Arner

In the Midst of Crisis...TRUST!

By Barbara Deal, 2017

Let's try an experiment. Relax for a moment, and watch what you feel when I say this word: Hope. Hope. Hope.

Now let that go, and see what you feel when I say: Trust. Trust. Trust.

Hope. Trust.

For me, the word Hope puts me on alert a little bit. It sets me to looking for specific things. But trust....for me there is a letting go when I feel trust.

No need to be in charge, or to solve everybody's problems. I relax into God's presence, trusting, and knowing that God has perfect solutions that are so much above and beyond anything I could ask or even imagine.

If we trust God, if we truly trust that God is working out God's purposes in our lives, why would we need hope? Trust is active

participation in letting go and letting God, while hope often gets caught up in looking for specific outcomes, that might not be God's best outcome. Hope can get in the way.

I learned a powerful lesson in trust from Del Anderson. The most powerful prayer he had discovered in all his long life, was also the simplest prayer. When he was facing a major crisis and didn't know how to begin to solve it, or when he became overwhelmed by the constant, ongoing wars and conflicts in the world – so opposite to the God's Kingdom of love – he had learned to pray three simple words: Father, I'm trusting.

This little prayer grabbed my heart. It isn't, Father, I trusted you yesterday. It isn't, Father, I'll trust you tomorrow. But rather, Father, I'm trusting, right now, in this moment, in this circumstance, in this crisis, in this need.

SIA Partners Respond to COVID-19

Emergency Fund Updates

1. LGBTI people in Uganda are particularly vulnerable right now, with only a few grocery stores open and tensions running high. Universal Love Alliance provided food relief to 40 people. They also were on hand to care for a gay refugee who was beaten up in the refugee camp. ULA was able to get him to a safe place.

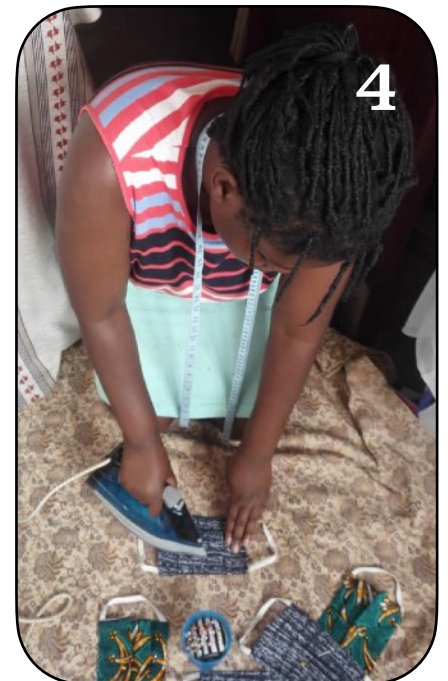


2. Wambui Nguyo and Romano Iluku (SIA Small Business Fund Coordinators) distributed food to 38 households (173 people!) in Kibera informal settlement in Nairobi, Kenya. "It becomes difficult to quarantine when people are starving," says Mathew Obonyo. Many in the area rely on casual jobs and daily sales to provide food for their families.



3. Mudo Gwa Makama (Uganda) prays in thanksgiving for the food she received. "Ooh Lord, I thank you for the support you have sent to me, through these people all the way from USA. People who even do not know me. I used to be laughed at because I am childless, but Father you gave me children from abroad to think of me and also friends here in Uganda so that they can reach me in the village."

4. The MILCOT social workers are busy sewing masks (like many of you have been!) to hand out in the community.
5. In western Kenya, Matungu Community Development Charity is organizing members who have sewing machines to sew face masks. Judith Were received a small loan last year to expand her tailoring shop, now she is sewing masks for the community.



"Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?"

- James 2:15-16

A Community Survey in Uganda

Midwives and Social Workers Interview 120 Households

Harriet Nayiga and Caroline Nakanyika are the formidable women behind Midwife Led Community Transformation (MILCOT) in Uganda. They are ready to serve by attending to the reproductive health needs in their community.

But what does that community look like? What are the struggles? After receiving a \$2,000 SIA grant in January, MILCOT's first action was to talk to young mothers and adolescents (aged 10-24) from 120 households in Nansana Division in Kampala.

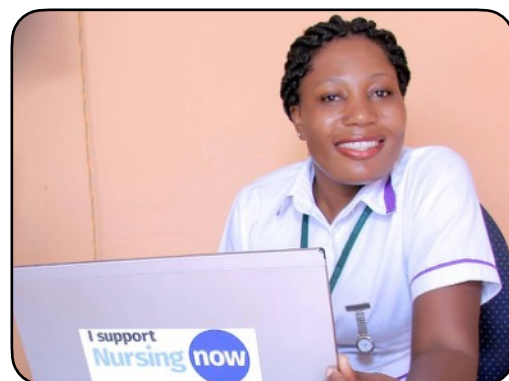
The survey results (some highlight show on right) are informing the next steps for MILCOT. They are in conversations with the local government to get approval for a drop-in center. This will fill the gap in access to health services in this poorer neighborhood in Kampala. The center will be a welcoming place for girls who are dealing with trauma, sexually transmitted infections, and pregnancy.

The women at MILCOT know that domestic violence increases during a crisis. While their workshops are on hold, they are adapting to the current lockdown restrictions. **The social workers and midwives are now providing counseling and information through the phone and by text message.**

Harriet writes to share her gratitude, "I and the entire MILCOT Team are grateful for the SIA Grant received. We thank you for trusting us with such big amount of funds. In our community service, we have always observed justice, equality, respect,

transparency, and accountability in regard to human dignity and the environment."

A MILCOT social worker goes out into the community to sit and listen to the life stories and struggles of potential workshop participants.



Harriet is a nurse and midwife who is passionate about getting out of the hospital and into the village, where people most need assistance.

Key Findings



Word of mouth most important source of health information (over newspaper, radio, or TV)



34% of the interviewed youth were **mothers**, indicating a high degree of vulnerability in the community



58% were **self-employed** (a category that includes commercial sex work)



50% said they go to the **drug store**, rather than the health clinic when they need health services



2/3 had **not finished elementary school** (mostly because of lack of money for school fees)

It's easy to give monthly to SIA online! Set up your recurring donation now at <http://spiritinaction.org/donate>

SIA is a 501(c)(3), tax-exempt, charitable foundation.
Tax ID# 93-1207351 We appreciate your prayers, comments, questions, and tax-deductible contributions.

New & Ongoing Grants

New grants are awarded every six months at SIA Board Meetings



CIFORD Kenya (Girls' Empowerment) Workshops for girls, boys and community leaders on the topic of anti-female genital mutilation (FGM) and youth empowerment.

Flaming Chalice, Rwanda (Refugee Support) & Burundi (Economic Development) Café/community center run by 12 Burundian refugees in Rwanda. Sewing machines and training for sewing feminine pads in Burundi.

Hope for Relief Malawi (Girls' Education) Constructing two more changing rooms at schools. Hosting life-skills and empowerment seminars for girls. 25 bicycles for vulnerable students.

Kkuuto Development Initiative (KADI), Uganda (Rural Development; Skills Training) Seeds and training for farmers. Sewing machines for training.

Manyamula Community Savings and Investment Promotion (COMSIP) Cooperative, Malawi (Agriculture, Organizational Development) Support for Cooperative administration and general operating budget. Peanut oil processing machine and storage room.

Midwife-Led Organization for Community Transformation (MILCOT), Uganda (Health Services) Outreach and emergency support for sexual reproductive health rights for marginalized women in Kampala. (See more, page 4)

Pastoralist Child Foundation, Kenya (Girls Empowerment and Anti Female Genital Mutilation Campaign) Support for administration and general operating budget.

Rebuilders Charity, Democratic Republic of Congo (Skills Development) Training classes for sewing skills. Funding for sewing machines. Start-up grants for 20 women.

Set Her Free, Uganda (Economic Development) Poultry project and skills training for girls who have left violent home or work situations.

Sonkoyo Nailepu Women's Group, Kenya (Economic Development) 10 bulls and 20 lambs for this cooperative of Maasai women.

Universal Love Ministries, Uganda (Human Rights, LGBT Rights, Organizational Development) Administrative support for general operations. (See more, page 7)

Visionary Women's Centre, Kenya (Economic Development) Poultry project for 80 women.

*SIA Small Business

Fund Funding for 25 new businesses in Kenya, Malawi, and Uganda in December 2019.

Top: June Wanga was trained as a nurse and now runs a chemist shop in Korogocho slum, Kenya with a Small Business Fund grant. Neighbors can buy a small amount of medication, making it more affordable. Her brother passed away and so June pays for her nephew's school fees.

Above: Solar panels outside the home of Milly in Aboke, Uganda. Solar panels help people see after the sun goes down around 6pm all year. There is no electrical grid in Aboke.



Thank you to our generous supporters!

We gratefully acknowledge those who have contributed to SIA from Sept 10, 2019 to April 29, 2020.

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“Love me just as I am”: Inclusivity Clubs in Uganda

“Love me just as I am. Let it be unconditional love; love me just as I am.” This is a theme song for the Biteriko School Inclusivity Club in Western Uganda. The club gathers regularly to talk about accepting everyone and welcoming differences. They put on drama skits and sing songs about the importance of girls’ education. They see a chance for a better, more equitable future in Uganda.

Last May, Barbara Deal and I visited Biteriko School and attended a rally led by the Inclusivity Club members. The air was warm and humid, the skies filled with puffy clouds after a morning of rain.



Inclusivity Club member Nuwahereza Monica welcomes Tanya to the Harmony Garden last May.



Members of the Inclusivity Club perform a drama about parents paying for their girls to attend school and the importance of education for all children. The portrayal of an unreasonable, patriarchal father draws laughter from the crowd of students, parents, and teachers.

The club also runs a Harmony Garden, learning about organic farming and to grow food for themselves and their neighbors. In this way, human rights and food security lessons are intertwined. I visited the garden and cut some big kale leaves for us to eat later that evening.

The Harmony Gardens and Inclusivity Clubs are programs of Universal Love Alliance (ULA), a grassroots organization in Uganda. A SIA grant for office rent and supplies means that the ULA team can use their time and resources to teach tolerance, mentor students, and promote empowerment projects.

When establishing a Harmony Garden, ULA provides the school with a large water tank, hoes, spades, watering cans, and rubber boots. Then, the students grow kale, tomatoes, potatoes, and other nutritious vegetables, which they can sell to raise money to sustain their club.

From this garden, Inclusive Club members are also Sharing the Gift by giving some of their produce to single mothers, HIV-positive women, and elderly people in the community.

Read our blog posts for success stories, photos, and inspiration! <http://spiritinaction.org/news>

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“Spirit in Action is one of the silver linings”

"In this hard time where each nation is fighting to regain sanity due to challenges caused by COVID-19, Spirit in Action is one of the silver linings and ray of hope because they stretched out their hands to help people in Githurai."

SIA partner Lilian Wanjira (**pictured below on the left**) works as an accountant in the Githurai neighborhood of Nairobi, Kenya. She also has a passion for volunteering to help women, especially those who are leaving abusive relationships.

With a SIA emergency grant Lilian distributed food to 32 families



who are particularly vulnerable in this time of pandemic.

"The soap and flour was welcomed with so much gratitude that while distributing the foodstuffs it made me shed tears seeing how grateful these families were."

Pictured above: A SIA emergency grant is also

helping Matungu village in western Kenya. Water buckets provide hand washing facilities in a rural community with no running water. The Matungu Community Development Charity is installing these bucket-faucets in the outdoor market where people come to buy food. The rural community does not have a grocery store.



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Tanya Cothran, Executive Director

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