



**Spirit
In
Action**

Micro Grants
Major Change

Spring & Summer Newsletter 2021

Spirit in Action

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Successful Group Therapy for Young Women in Uganda



Each young woman was given \$10 in start-up capital to start a business. They are now selling fish, vegetables, or tea and baked goods along the roadside. This group started a frying business.

When the social workers and psychological counselors from Midwife-Led Community Transformation (MILCOT) did an assessment of the young women in their community near Kampala, Uganda, they found an alarming number of girls who were in violent relationships and experiencing depression.

MILCOT used funding from SIA to form two support groups using the Social Emotional Economic Empowerment through Knowledge of Group Support Psychotherapy model.

Each group of eight girls got together for a series of eight sessions.

This model educates group members about depression, creating a **supportive environment to explore trauma, and helping the young women develop positive coping and problem-solving skills.** The sessions help each girl know that she is not alone in her struggles. They also form savings groups and start a business together.

“We have seen that this model brought smiles on the faces of these women and girls,” writes Caroline Nakanyike and Harriet Nayiga, MILCOT leaders. “Also, by coming up with income generating projects they have boosted their individual and family economic status.”

The outcome of these sessions is a general improvement of well-being, including renewed energy for activities that allow them to express their talents. Participants reported feeling more patient and self-assured. One member resurrected her childhood interest in basketry, which enables her to contribute to her household income with enjoyment!

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

Farming in the Kerio Valley

Update from Samuel & Rhoda Teimuge

Samuel and Rhoda Teimuge of Eldoret, Kenya have been part of Spirit in Action since the very beginning. Last month, they applied for a SIA grant to install a drip-irrigation system, which will serve as a model for training neighbors. Samuel describes their latest adventures in farming:

Rhoda, our son Timothy, and I have moved to Kerio Valley, in the Rift Valley of Kenya. Tim is training on becoming a young farmer, taking a course in Agribusiness. Rhoda is raising chickens, and we are planting pixie orange trees and growing vegetables. We are in a very rural area, to the east of Eldoret. It looks like we shall have short rains this year and the Valley is very, very hot.

All the families live at the base of the hills because they get water from the streams flowing down. The water does not reach the lower valley where we are. The guy who sold me the land was frustrated by the lack of water. Right now we

are watering our plants by hand, using water we have stored in large tanks.

When the community saw what we have done with our farm, they got motivated toward moving to this area. One by one they visited us to request water. **I am careful not to induce**

them or tell them what to do.

The best development has to come from them, as this will last. We are encouraging them to clear the bushes and start to fence their properties.

In this area most people are only planting maize, but some are now talking about planting mangoes, bananas, and pawpaws (papaya). We have already motivated ten farmers to plant bananas. Yes the land is hard dry but with water it is soft, deep, and fertile ground.

We are doing soil control so that when there are heavy rains, it does not pull away the top soil. Thank you for funding a drip irrigation system, which will benefit the whole community.



The new Teimuge homestead in the Rift Valley. They are modeling growing crops and water management in this dry area.

Yesterday's Manna is Not Good Enough for Today

By Del Anderson, 2005

I certainly wouldn't have desired to break my hip, but now six months later, I'm certain that I've learned a lot that I wouldn't have learned otherwise. I think it's a little easier now to understand that "I of myself can do nothing." I couldn't take the next breath without the Spirit there to keep me going.

This experience has pointed me in the direction of growth. **I am not the Del I was yesterday. My focus is to come forth as a new person each day and realize that I am an expression of God** and that I'm here to let God be God in me, through me, and as me.

I can't eat yesterday's stale manna. Yesterday's manna is not good enough for today. Manna has to be fresh. It's an ever-changing world.

As we accept each challenge, each change and seek God's guidance, we open ourselves to receive the Allness of the God consciousness, expressing and coming forth through us.

Meditation, contemplative meditation, and prayer are three of God's greatest tools. **The major thing is to let go, be still, listen, and focus and focus.** Let my meditation be to know that my purpose is to keep expanding my consciousness and to let God take over entirely. **"God, each day give me a focused desire that wills to will to do your will."** God's Kingdom is within us. We need to let it come forth, step by step here on earth even at our most challenging times.

Life is not easy. It's a challenge.

Life is not a destination. It's a process.

A Tragedy That Changed My Life

By Fulgence Ndagijimana

Fulgence is Executive Director of Flaming Chalice International, a SIA Grant Partner working in Burundi and Rwanda. SIA contributes to their operating costs, so that they can focus on delivering their programs. Fulgence joined the SIA African Advisory Board this year. He wrote this story as part of a SIA-funded writing workshop hosted by the Barefoot Guide Writing School. This is excerpted from the workshop's publication, "Stories from the Heart."

It was a normal Monday morning and I was looking forward to a normal busy day at the office. I left home and got to the office at about 9:30 am in the morning. As I was reading emails, a colleague came to my office to tell me that there were people who wanted to see me. I was not in the mood to talk to anyone. My plate was full. I asked him to tell those visitors to come back another time or give him a message for me. Shortly after he left, two men came to my office, sat down and told me they needed to arrest me. My heart raced, I had goosebumps. They were in plain clothes, did not have an arrest warrant and I suspected these were the people everyone had been talking about who kidnapped ordinary citizens from their homes, offices, bars or restaurants. The bodies of the kidnapped were found on the streets, in the rivers or simply never seen again. In my mind's eye, I was about to be one of those victims.

I asked them to let me call my lawyer and they did not want me to. I asked them to show me an arrest warrant and they showed a document from a distance I could not read it but could see it had my name on it. Seeing that I was resisting, they forcibly took my laptop and my two mobile phones and asked me to go out with them. Although I could not see any weapons, I assumed they were armed. I agreed to follow them out of the office. They went out first and as I was closing the office, I saw a third man, holding a gun to the head of the colleague who was outside. It was now clear in my mind, we had been attacked and

we were in deep trouble. Our chances of getting out alive were very slim.

They forced my colleague to drive my car. Beside the driver, on the passenger seat, was the man with the gun and I was on the back seat squeezed between the two men who had come into the office. I was not sure where they were taking us. **On that long drive, I thought about my wife and my son, my parents, my brothers and my sisters, the church members I was serving.** I was having an intense conversation with them. I was thinking about the unfinished business of life and quickly turned to people who mattered most to me. It felt like I was telling them that I loved them, I did what I could to serve them. I was asking forgiveness as I clearly felt these were my last moments on earth.

We drove - were driven to be precise - outside the city to an empty area with a small house. The hut was dusty, and I was invited to sit on the dusty floor. I was interrogated for hours.

I would later learn that two children, 9 and 7 years old, who were grazing cows went to alert the police that something fishy was happening in the hut. Later in the day, a policeman, who was not part of the plan, came to rescue me. I was taken to a police station and that is where I spent the night. The next day, after the news had spread to my friends and colleagues, in the country and abroad, a delegation came to get me from the local administration office in that rural area. The media was present. The media included a foreign witness in the person of a correspondent of the New York Times. **I briefly thought it was the end of the ordeal and I would get to go home.** I was smelly, I had sat in the dust for hours. I had not had a shower. I was looking forward to freedom again. I was so wrong.

Instead of arresting my abductors, I was the one

Continue reading on page 5...



SIA Partners in Action

Community Impact

1. Ribbon Cutting Ceremony Ubuntu Community Organization opened their new brightly-painted office in Githurai, Kenya. Ubuntu's leader, Lilian (in the polka-dotted shirt) has enlisted volunteers to support women in the community. The building will be an internet cafe, the first in the area!



2. Keeping Track of Success Moses Dombola of Maranatha Carpentry and Joinery Shop in Manyamula, Malawi holds up his record book. The SIA Small Business Fund training includes basic accounting skills so that new entrepreneurs like Moses can keep track of sales and expenses. We also use a picture-based counting system to accommodate people who are illiterate. Demand has been high for Moses's door and window frames, and bed frames.



3. Connecting Faiths Kakuuto Development Initiative - Uganda is a multi-faith organization, bringing together Christians and Muslims in their rural community. The organization gathered to Share the Gift by giving food to their Muslim members to help them break their Ramadan fast. SIA celebrates each person's walk of faith.

4. Trauma Healing Workshops

Listening Cycle workshops led by Empowering Communities as Actors for Transformation (E-CATS Kenya) give participants a chance



to speak about the realities in their lives and how they deal with them. It is a way to provide emotional support and also help people to build their self-image. The participants are living in informal settlements and below the poverty line.

5. Changing Norms, Supporting Girls

Elizabeth Lemoyog, is a teacher at Pastoralist Child Foundation in Samburu, Kenya. Here she is teaching youth on the harmful effects of female genital mutilation (FGM). SIA supports PCF with operating costs so that their staff are well-supported and they can focus on training.



19 Grant Partners

11 in Kenya

5 in Uganda

2 in Malawi

1 in Burundi

\$149,783 given in grants June 2020-May 2021

See a full list of our grants and amazing partners:

www.spiritinaction.org/current-grant-partners

Continued from page 3

who got arrested. I was taken into police custody and spent the next nine days under investigation for charges that kept changing, from attempt to overthrow the government, to money laundering and killing high ranking people in the army. It helps to have friends in many different places. As soon as the news broke, a petition, started by a ministerial colleague from the Philippines, was launched and signed by more than two thousand people in less than three days. People sent letters to Burundian embassies abroad especially in Europe, US and Canada and they made phone calls. **In the end, the pressure was strong enough.** I was eventually released on condition that I report to the police as needed. The catch was that the people who had kidnapped me were freed and my colleague had disappeared. There was no talk of returning my work computer, the money that I had been forced to sign for and my two phones. As soon as I was released, arrangements were made for me to leave the country.

I was discouraged from spending another night at home for fear that they might come to get me at night. I was glad that I was free but still scared and sad to have to live in hiding when I believed then, and believe now, that I had done nothing wrong. Early the next morning, I left the country. I never went home again. I have not seen my house since then.

A friend of mine drove me to the border. It was the longest and most painful journey of my life. I was scared that I would be intercepted on the two-hour journey to the border. **There was also a larger pain, that of leaving my country and not knowing when I would be able to go back.** As I got to the other side, I looked back. I closed my eyes as if I was praying. I was thankful and sad. I was heartbroken. I had watched other people flee the country but I had decided to stay even after our sanctuary was attacked and now, I was out. Was it an act of cowardness or a declaration of defeat or simply a time to recharge and regroup? It would be a lie if I said I am clearer now than I was then.

Leaving my family and my home behind was the most painful experience. I had aging parents I wanted to stay close to. Crossing the border meant I would likely not see them again. I was serving a congregation and leaving the country felt like a betrayal of my call, putting my life ahead of the people I served. **I felt like the opposite of a good leader who would rather give his life to the people entrusted to him or her, than to leave.**

After three months in Rwanda, I found my way to Canada and my family joined me six months later. In exile, things stayed confused. My body was part of the struggle, I could not sleep, I cried a lot. Every day, I reflected on what it means to be uprooted. I felt sad about it.

In the midst of it all, I was slowly encouraged by the outpouring of love and solidarity of my family and friends. I was particularly supported in every way possible by my global church community. Many people believed that I had made the right decision. They encouraged me to be part of the work in different ways.

Being so close to death and experiencing human cruelty, not in the news, not in a book or stories from far away but as a personal direct experience gave me a different lens through which I now look at people, the world and God.

Flaming Chalice International is an organization that I founded as a result of my ordeal. The organization supports people in situation of emergencies. People who need support without which they would rot in prisons or even die because of who they are or what they think. I know what it means to feel lost and to feel that everything is against us. **My work is to make sure people can see a light at the end of the tunnel.** My experience as a refugee, torture survivor and immigrant informs the work I do, and it was born out of my experience. I would not wish that experience to anyone, but I strive to ensure that mine did not happen in vain.

Thank you to our generous supporters!

We gratefully acknowledge those who have contributed to SIA from Sept. 17, 2020 to April 30, 2021.

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Never Too Old To Live Fully

Did you know that Del Anderson was 90 years old when he founded Spirit in Action? Anytime I start to fear that time is running out, I remember how much Del - and so many other SIA role models - accomplished in his "later years."

Del's friend and founding SIA Advisory Board Member, Paul Jaun (1917-2011), is another example of someone who was a lifelong



"Life calls to be lived with **intensity** and **purpose**."

- Fulgence Ndagijimana
(Read his story on page 3)

learner and sharer. Paul (pictured below with Samuel and Kigan Teimuge) was a professional beekeeper in California into his 80s and he attended monthly meetings of the Alameda County Beekeepers Association into his 90s.

A recent legacy bequest from Paul Jaun will enable us to continue his work to promote garden pollinators and thriving food systems. When asked in 2010 about the plans for his legacy, Paul told Dave Gattey, "when you like something, you finance it." We are honored by his generosity and trust.

Our partners in Africa are also lifelong givers. At 73 years old, Mama Santa continues to be active in her community. Her home in rural Aboke, Uganda is the gathering place for people in the community. She was a midwife and nurse for many years and she gives food and advice to those who stop by to visit.

Del liked to say, **"The real truth is we don't grow old; as we stop growing we are old."**

Honoring Mac Dunham

SIA has been deeply touched by the life of Malcolm Dunham, who recently "graduated" into his next life while peacefully at home, surrounded by loved ones. Mac was a monthly donor to SIA for many years. Personally, I was touched by Mac's kind presence, his rich prayer life and the way he marveled in small beauties in life.

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

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Zoom Trainings for SIA Grassroots Partners

“A journey of a million miles starts with a single step. For me, this is the step to my million miles.” This was Tiba Zimba’s enthusiastic response to a Zoom workshop for SIA Grant Partners about how to “pitch” your organization. (Tiba is director of Reach Girls in Malawi.) Already this year, we have hosted three workshops for our nineteen grant partners.

Having a pitch ready helps our partners easily talk about their work to potential supporters - on both the local and international level. During the workshops, we broke into groups to practice our pitches and give feedback to each other.

Many of our partners are locally-based, grassroots organizations and the participants



Tanya Cothran with African Advisory Board Members, Naomi Ayot (Uganda) and Dennis Kurgat (Kenya). We are part of the SIA Family! (July 2019.)

appreciate the workshops in terms of **providing practical information, and also encouragement and a sense of solidarity.** “I call it the SIA Family,” says African Advisory Board Member Naomi Ayot in Uganda, referring to our way of connecting on a personal level with our grant partners.

We are already planning more workshops, which will be designed and co-led by our partners, African Advisory Board Members, and the SIA Office.

“Thank you for organizing the Zoom meeting” wrote Musa Semakula, Director of KADI-Uganda. “As a grassroots community-based organization we were very excited and honored for the invitation for such a meeting. **We are proud to be partners of SIA.**”



SPRING & SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER

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