



**Spirit
In
Action**

Micro Grants
Major Change

Fall & Winter Newsletter 2025

Spirit in Action

Del Anderson, Founder

Executive Director

Tanya Cothran

Operations Manager

Dannah Rosales

info@spiritinaction.org

www.spiritinaction.org

www.facebook.com/spiritinaction

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

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Defying Expectations

Celebrating Ubuntu Community Organization's graduates



The Ubuntu beauty school graduates are wearing gowns that they sewed themselves, which Ubuntu can now rent out to future cohorts and other schools as an income-generating activity!

Ubuntu Community-Based Organization recently celebrated a milestone moment: the graduation of its very first cohort of twelve hairdressing students. The occasion not only marked the trainees' achievements but also showcased how **the program is winning the trust and support of the community.**

When the training began (with the help of an SIA grant), many community members were skeptical. They worried that young mothers would be unable to complete the program, or that they wouldn't be able to get jobs when they graduated.

Ubuntu's model proved them wrong. **By offering half-day classes, allowing mothers to bring their children,** and supporting trainees with practical work placements in local salons, Ubuntu created a program designed for success. Out of the initial group of fifteen, only three participants dropped out, while the rest graduated.

Graduation day became a community-wide celebration, with neighbors stepping out of their homes to cheer on the women in their gowns.

This milestone coincided with Ubuntu's 5th Anniversary, making it a double celebration of perseverance, empowerment, and impact. The **community members now ask eagerly about new courses,** a true sign that Ubuntu's work is inspiring lasting change.

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It's Grant Application Season!

An overview of SIA's grant invitation process

At the end of September, we at the SIA Office send out Letters of Invitation to organizations to apply for funding in 2026.

Instead of having an open call for applications, which would likely flood our small team with more requests than we can manage, we invited the 28 grassroots organizations we funded for 2025 to share their plans for 2026. Although most of our grants are for one year, **we like to continue supporting organizations with which we've established relationships** and have seen make a positive impact in their communities.

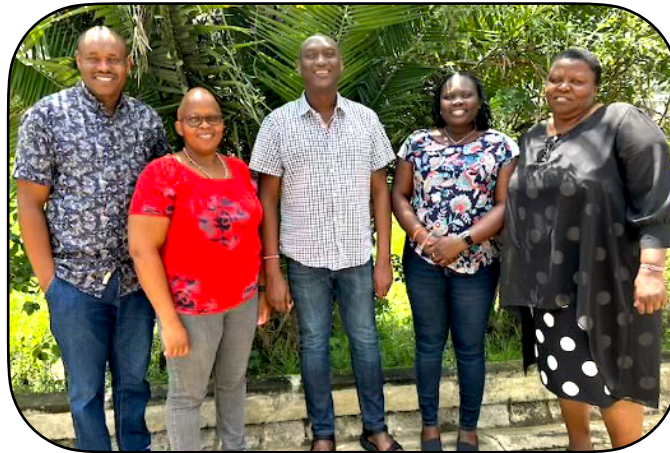
In 2019, we established the African Advisory Board (AAB; pictured below) to **move decision-making power closer to the communities being served**. Our AAB members bring valuable expertise, years of experience in community development, and knowledge of the East African context to the application review process. Two AAB members read each proposal, using a rubric for scoring.

Groups that rate highly have a broad base of leadership, with leaders from the community being served. They also run

programs focused on empowerment rather than creating dependence. One of the rubric questions asks reviewers to consider whether the project appears well thought out, including how the group will address potential challenges. We also consider how well they have shown their impact from previous grants.

Using the rubric data, the AAB meets online with the Executive Director and takes on the challenging task of deciding how to allocate available funding. Their recommendations are then passed along to the North American Board for approval.

Our new Operations Manager, Dannah Rosales, joined the SIA team in August, taking over from Elizabeth Stanley. She coordinates the grant process, facilitating communication between applicants, the AAB, and the SIA Office, and organizing the many files.



The AAB met in person in Nairobi, Kenya in April 2024. From Left to Right: Dennis Kiprop Kurgat (Eldoret, Kenya), Wambui Nguyo (Nairobi, Kenya), Mwibutsa Ndagijimana (from Bujumbura, Burundi, now living in Ottawa, Canada), Naomi Ayot Oyaro (Kampala, Uganda), Margaret Ikiara (Meru, Kenya)

On Partnerships

By Del Anderson, SIA Founder, 2000

Greetings from Spirit in Action as we join in a daily spiritual vision journeying from sense to soul, from self to Christ.

Our intent is not to build programs to just help people but to create an atmosphere that enables them to build their own inner self-worth and empowerment.

As fellow learners, we make space so that everyone can sense the wonder of what and who they are. The result of our collective prayers and efforts is communities that create

employment and cultivate self-sufficiency. Thus, together we serve the wholeness of each person's being - spiritual, physical, economic, and social.

Thank you for being a member of the redemptive team that nurtures the process of individuals being changed so that communities are changed. Yes, and as communities are changed, countries are changed. As countries are changed, the world is changed.

SIA Partners in Action

Transformative community-led development

1. Buzzing at Teteri Farm (Kenya). Twenty beehive boxes are now set up on Samuel and Rhoda Teimuge’s Teteri Farm in Western Kenya. The bees feed off the sweet nectar of the orange trees in their orchard.

2. Step-by-Step Cafe (Uganda) Florence Ajok received her \$250 Small Business Fund Grant in July 2023 and rented a storefront to open her cafe, called Step-by-Step, a reference to her path to financial security. Florence also supplies the teachers at the nearby school with tea and snacks in exchange for the school fees for the several orphans under her care. Kathleen, Tanya, and Naomi ate an amazing lunch at her busy cafe this July.

3. Pineapple Fields Forever (Uganda) SIA Board President Kathleen King is thrilled to pick and enjoy a fresh, sweet pineapple in the fields of the Kakuuto Development Initiative (KADI). Members of KADI meet twice a week to care for the pineapple plants. To date, they have planted 87,000 pineapple suckers!



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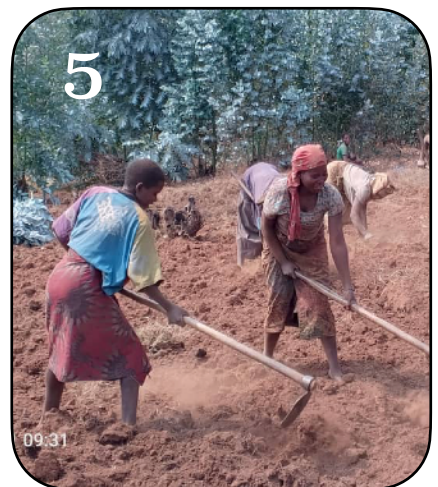
4. A Seat Fit for a Queen (Kenya) The newly trained youth woodworkers at

Transformers Mathare are making beautiful bench seats and footstools to sell, using a bench saw purchased with a SIA grant. These new skills provide young people from low-income families with promising job prospects.



4

5. Working Side By Side (Burundi) Members of Tubinganire Women’s Group are busy preparing the soil for their potato seedlings. Their last harvest was very successful, and group members who helped plant were able to buy potatoes at a reduced price. Pray for a good rainy season this year!



5



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Read our blog for more Grant Partner updates! <http://spiritinaction.org/news>
See a list of our 2025 grants: www.spiritinaction.org/current-grant-partners

Reflections on My Recent Trip to Uganda

by Wambui Nguyo

SIA African Advisory Board (Nairobi, Kenya)

Reflecting on my recent journey, I felt a profound sense of gratitude for the experiences, insights, and friendships that shaped it. The journey provided not just a chance to discover new places but also a valuable opportunity to connect deeply with individuals and groups dedicated to shared values and goals.

Everything was exceptionally well-planned, and I was able to spend **ten days interacting with four partners.**

In my role on the African Advisory Board, I was invited to provide an additional perspective for our partners in Uganda. I was there to support my local counterpart, Naomi, in identifying potential improvements, observing the partners' progress, and **gathering insights that I could bring back to Kenya.**

One of the highlights of the trip was seeing the relationship between Naomi and the partners. She gives them a lot of support with their work and opportunities to interact with other players in the country, which they would benefit from.

The partners' commitment, transparency, and readiness to touch lives are creating a notable difference in the communities where they work. I had the opportunity to **deepen my understanding of how our collective efforts**



In July, Tanya Cothran, Executive Director, Naomi Ayot Oyaro (African Advisory Board, Uganda), Wambui Nguyo (AAB, Kenya), and Kathleen King (North American Board President) visited the SIA Grant Partner organizations in Uganda.

can complement and strengthen each other.

Through seeing their finances, I saw that our funding to them was clearly documented, and there was clear evidence of its utilization.

The journey provided me with an opportunity to evaluate our accomplishments as an organization and to see potential for growth. Connecting with partners face-to-face and actually meeting those people behind the reports I had read deepened my trust, respect, and shared vision for the future.

I came back with a renewed motivation. The dedication of our partners truly inspired me, and **I**

believe that by nurturing these relationships, we can achieve even more outstanding accomplishments together.



Wambui always joined in when we were invited to dance!

Typical Site Visit Day Connection, Joy, and Learning

6:30am Rise with the sun; Uganda is on the equator, so daylight is about 6am to 6pm all year round.

7:30am Breakfast of fresh fruit, toast and eggs. There's the option to add ginger or masala spices to your tea. (Tea leaves grown in Uganda!)

8:30am Pack up the van and leave the hotel. This morning, we're traveling with the Universal Love Alliance team, going to a gathering of workshop graduates. (Wambui is pictured above at the event!) Along the road, fruit and vegetables are piled in nice stacks.

11:00am Stop for tea and snacks (sweet bananas and cakes made of banana and cassava flour) before arriving. As we eat, we discuss the importance of local organizations setting their own development priorities.

Justice Workers

SIA Partner: Burundi Bridges to Justice

This year, SIA was pleased to support Burundi Bridges to Justice's Initiative to Protect the Rights of the Most Vulnerable.

Their team of six lawyers, both men and women, provided legal assistance to 48 vulnerable people detained in Bujumbura police stations. **All 48 individuals were eventually released** by the police, prosecutor's office, or a judge, showing the direct impact of the grant on protecting the rights of the most vulnerable from the very first moments of their detention.

The lawyers also make weekly visits to the jails, **educating the detained individuals about their fundamental rights** and legal guarantees.

BBJ is one of the organizations impacted by the end of USAID. The funding helped pay the rent for their office, which is on the same road as the courthouse. This proximity is especially important to potential clients since public transportation is so expensive. (See *In the News* insert.)



Pictured: Mrs. Fortunate Niyonkuru, one of BBJ's lawyers, with a client she was able to get released.

In the News: Fuel Crisis in Burundi

The fuel crisis in Burundi is ongoing, with many gas stations empty and people waiting weeks to fill up, or paying exorbitant prices on the black market. Officially, a gallon of gas at the pump is about \$6, but many are forced to get fuel on the black market, where they'll pay over \$30/gallon!

Burundi does not produce any of its own fuel, so it needs foreign currency to import it. But the sources of foreign currency - tea, coffee, and aid - haven't been steady in recent years. Expensive and elusive fuel has also made it so people have to wait longer and pay more for public transport. Even with this reality, SIA Partner Flaming Chalice International has been able to help three families get to the hospital from the remote village of Ryansoro in the past four months!

Typical Site Visit Day (continued)

12:15pm Arrive at the school in the rural area of Kamwengye, where over 400 parents and kids are gathered for song, dance, and a drama about the impact of domestic violence on a whole family.

2:30pm After the presentations, each SIA team member shares reflections and words of encouragement to those gathered. We also take lots of photos and shake hands.

3-6pm Say goodbye to ULA and drive 3 hours to Kasese, where the next SIA Grant Partner is based. From the rolling SIA Office, Kathleen goes through photos from our recent visit, and Tanya fills out the site visit report. The potholes and speed bumps give us a "massage." We stop for a snack of roasted maize and take pics of the baboons along the road.

7:30pm Dinner with the Great Lakes Peace Centre (GLPC) team (fresh tilapia from the lake, and chicken and fries); Laugh together and talk about differences and similarities between Uganda and the U.S.

9:30pm Post on social media about the visit with ULA. Then, bedtime!



Our driver, Matte, takes a selfie as we cross the equator. Fatina, Director of GLPC, (pictured on the left) caught a ride from Kasese to Kampala to attend a Monitoring & Evaluation workshop.

Seedlings for Sale

Blessed Hands Nursery in Eldoret, Kenya

In July, Blessed Hands made their first sale of 3,000 purple passion fruit seedlings, **grown in their own nursery garden** in Eldoret, Kenya. Since receiving the SIA start-up grant, the fifteen young women in the group worked with agronomists and attended workshops to learn about farming and marketing. With their new skills, they set up a nursery for coffee, orange, avocado, banana, and passion fruit seedlings.

That first passion fruit seedling sale, to a single farmer, **earned the group 34,000 Ksh (~\$265)**! They also sell to smallholder farmers, who hear about them through word of mouth, WhatsApp community groups, and Facebook marketing, and come to buy 100, 200, or 500 seedlings at a time.

“We are really working hard,” says Lilian Cherop, one of the group’s leaders. **“The good thing about our group is that we are all united.** We are planning that by the end of



Blessed Hands is a member-led organization of 15 young women. Here, they are excited to be making their first big sale of seedlings!

this year, every member will be earning a decent income for their households from the money we shall get from seedlings sales.” This project is bringing financial independence, which also gives them power.

As a way to pay it forward, Blessed Hand members practice what SIA calls Sharing the Gift by giving banana and avocado seedlings to lower-income community members.

In May, Blessed Hands **met with the other SIA Partners in Western Kenya** - Visionary Women’s Center, and One Soul Matters - to share experiences around budgeting and record-keeping, and their organizational challenges and successes.

These **opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and quarterly online training sessions** are benefits that SIA facilitates in addition to our grant funds.



“Their tomorrow will not be the same as their today”

Words of encouragement from Fiona in Uganda

Fiona, a graduate of the SIA Partner Adolescence Psycho-Social Support and Resource Center’s (APSARC) vocational skills program, offered words of encouragement to other girls starting over after surviving gender-based violence. “They should not lose hope. They should build hope within themselves. That their tomorrow will not be the same as their today. They can change their lives from zero to something.”

Tanya and Kathleen visited Fiona’s salon in July, where she braids hair, adds extensions, does hair relaxing, and dyes hair. From this, she supports her two young children.

Thank you to our generous supporters!

We gratefully acknowledge those who have contributed to SIA from April 11 to Sept 15, 2025.

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Cabbage Harvest in Burundi

APDEI promotes nutritious vegetables

At the launch party for the APDEI school garden project, one of the teachers shared his enthusiasm for the initiative. Until now, the **only place to get vegetable seedlings was 15 km (9 miles) away**, which, when your only mode of transportation is walking, is quite far!

This summer, students at eight different high schools in the rural central region of Burundi **are harvesting cabbage they have grown with their own hands**. They are also selling cabbage heads and seedlings at market stalls in the local market. The community is responding with great enthusiasm, and there is more demand than supply for the seedlings.

APDEI's technical staff visit each school regularly, organizing both theoretical and practical sessions, so that students learn all the skills needed to **manage market gardening, from the nursery to harvest**.

SIA supports APDEI with general operating funds, **allowing them to hire dedicated staff** to run their garden projects, rabbit breeding program, school supply distribution, and savings-and-loans groups—all of which benefit the community.



High school students and their teachers show off the cabbages they have grown with APDEI this year.



FALL & WINTER 2025 NEWSLETTER

Tanya Cothran, Executive Director

PO Box 3384

Santa Cruz, CA 95063

Ask your loved ones to honor you with a gift to SIA this holiday season: www.spiritinaction.org/donate