



# Nikibasika

Children's Development  
Project



April 2010

Supporter Update

*Nikibasika* means "it is possible" in *kinyankole*, and it describes what this project is all about. Nikibasika is the home for 51 "orphaned and vulnerable" children in western Uganda, who we are educating and supporting to grow up to be self-sustaining adults who will contribute to their communities.

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When we arrived at Nikibasika this December, our vehicle wasn't even stopped before children came streaming off the porch, screaming their welcomes. They pulled open our doors and threw their arms around us, shouting "AUNTIE!"

This greeting was a far cry from the first visits to the project, several years ago, when the Canadians had to teach the children how to hug. And it illustrated what has happened over the past two or three years: the children have come to trust that we will do what we promise. They know they can count on their school fees, on food, and on our belief that they will grow up to be somebody important. That confidence shows in how they wrap their arms around us, in the questions they ask and in how

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relaxed and happy they are to be together. And it's testament that what we are doing is working, and that it matters.

Our December visit, as always, was a whirlwind of spending time with the children, making connections with the community, reviewing the work of the past year and planning for 2010. Our major structural change was the hiring of Gabriel Okiror as the on-the-ground program manager. Gabriel had been supporting Nikibasika as part of his role with Reach the Youth for the past year, and we had a very welcome opportunity to hand over the reins of Programme Manager to him. Gabriel brings great wisdom and experience as a father, social worker and manager of development programs, and we are confident that he will provide a stable support to the children as well as guide the program as we continue to develop it.

Our time with the children this year reminded us that many of them are not really children at all anymore! Only 14 of the Nikibasika children are still in primary school, with the rest making their way through "P7" (the critical year between primary and secondary school), secondary school and post-secondary. Two of the children are now in vocational training – Annet studying hairdressing in Kampala and "Big

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Gabriel with Beth, Moreen and Joel



## Nikibasika journey mission

**Strong Futures** We believe that the best way to provide sustainable support for a community is to enable the leaders of the future. We are committed to helping our children achieve their imagined futures, by providing education, shelter, food, medical care and housing until they are self-sustaining adults. We will support each of them with vocational training, university or the development of a business, to sustain themselves and be leaders in their communities.

**These Children as a Family** Our focus is on these 51 children, rather than continuing to add new children to the project. We want each member of this group to have the best chance possible, and to feel unique and loved.

**Community Connections** To help the children learn how they can make a difference in the world, we are partnering with community officials to create volunteer projects for the children. We also encourage the children to stay connected to their communities of origin wherever possible, by spending time with extended family and their home villages on holidays.



# Elinah's journey

## *From selling tomatoes on the street to university*

“All of that time, I prayed that I would find a way to go to university. But I didn’t really believe it would happen. Now I thank God...and I thank the Canadians.”

Last year, Elinah was living in Kampala in one room with her cousin and her cousin’s child, and was selling tomatoes and fruit on the street to scrape up a few shillings. Like many young people in Uganda, there was no path for her to follow once she’d finished secondary school.

Now, she is studying accounting, management and economics at university, working toward a degree in public administration. When she calls the last few months a “miracle,” you know she is completely sincere.

Poised, articulate, warm and elegant, Elinah is one of the oldest members of the Nikibasika project, and she is a role model for the younger children. When she talks to them about working hard and having dreams, they listen, knowing that she knows what she’s talking about.

Like all of the children at Nikibasika, Elinah’s early family life was difficult. Her father had 13 children with several different mothers. Her biological mother died, and her stepmother was abusive, and then abandoned her in her early teens. She found her way to the project and was looked after with the other children there at the time, but there was no program for post-secondary school.

This year, we have been able to initiate and begin funding a plan to support Nikibasika’s children into self-sustaining adulthood. Our goal is to equip the children to run small business, provide vocational training or give them a university education. We teach them that they are part of a bigger community, and they can change their worlds for the better. Creating a pool of strong, resourceful adults will make a difference.

Elinah is the trailblazer for this program. And when she waved her admission forms from university at us, her smile cracked wide open and she beamed. “I feel loved,” she said, simply.



## Creating a Family

“Who takes care of you, Moses?”  
 “Baptista!” “And you, Madam Melon?”  
 “Brenda!”

As we were saying our emotional goodbyes for the year, the children sprung a surprise on us. They lined up on the porch, demonstrating the each of the “big kids” had matched up with one of the littler kids, vowing to be each of their special friends and to look out for them.

This “mentoring” scheme was the culmination of a growing comfort with each other, and an observable belief we are starting to see among the bigger kids that they can make a difference in the world.

One of the new initiatives of the past year was the addition of a social worker, Tina Akia, to the staff. Through Tina’s efforts, the children created plays, songs and poems that

have helped them work through some of the trauma that they’ve been carrying from the time before they came to Nikibasika. Through these efforts, they also became an increasingly cohesive group, confident that they are in a place where they will be cared for in a way they never have been. And on their own, the bigger kids came up with a way to show the difference it makes, by taking on the care of the smaller children in a more formal way.

As we left Kasese for the year, we were confident the children were in good hands, with Tina’s steady support combined with the steady and wise guidance of our Programme Manager, Gabriel Okiror (also a social worker by training).

# Nikibasika

## \$\$ facts

A volunteer group of four people in Canada manages the project and raises funds. Our Canadian partner, the Canada Africa Community Health Alliance (CACHA) provides oversight and accountability and enables us to provide charitable tax receipts to donors. Our Ugandan partner, Reach the Youth, provides us with on the ground support, acts as the employer of the Nikibasika staff in Kasese, and provides accountability for spending.

### 1 Budget

Our total budget for the project is approximately \$90,000 Cdn per year. Exact costs shift as food, transportation and exchange rates change.

### 2 Funding

We have no steady or public sources of funding. Since 2008, we've been supported for the majority of our funds by individual donors and through two sources: the Tri-Adventure fundraiser ([www.triforafrica.org](http://www.triforafrica.org)) and Brendan Wood International. This year Nikibasika is the sole beneficiary of the Tri-Ad, which takes place August 20-22.

### 3 How we use funds

90% of the funds we raise go directly to the Nikibasika operational budget, with the remaining 10% supporting the core programs of our umbrella agency, the **Canada Africa Community Health Alliance (CACHA)**.

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Benson” learning to be a driver – and two in university (Elinah (see p. 2) and Silver, who is studying in Kigali). As the children get older, the project is changing. Costs for schooling are much higher, of course (secondary school costs 10 x as much as primary school, and university costs at least 5 x as much as secondary school). But beyond costs, it is necessary to support the children with career guidance and awareness of the bigger world around them.

One of the things that we've recognized is how important it is to help develop the children's belief that they can make a difference in the world, and can actually change their worlds. Even as the older children are studying physics and languages, they are also learning to understand the political and physical realities of a developing country. For many people in Uganda, a university education and a white collar job are the highest dream – and at the same time, the economy doesn't always support that infrastructure. Over the next few years, one of our major focuses will be on helping the children develop a sense of entrepreneurship and an awareness of the broader community they live in, local and global, and how they can influence and change it. When Joel says he might want to ultimately leave Uganda because the technological infrastructure is so terrible, we help him explore what he wants

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to do for a living (engineer), and how, as an engineer, he might be able to actually change that infrastructure.

This year, we're implementing a comprehensive new development programs to improve the children's practical skills (cooking, household needs), cultural awareness (crafts and dance), and computer skills, as well as more long-term career guidance programs. We are also excited about a partnership with the local municipality to create a community development program where the children will be involved in environmental projects around Kasese. The intention is partly to create stronger links between the children and the community, as well as to help the children

develop a more systemic awareness and understanding of their own ability to effect change.

When we reflect on the progress of the children at Nikibasika, the thing that strikes us more than anything is how little money in Canadian terms it takes to make a significant difference in the lives of children with no resources. Over the past few years, steady support from the Canadian community of generous people – donors, supporters, TRI-Ad participants – have made a profound impact on the lives of these 51 children. As they get older, trusting that that they can rely on our “virtual village” of Canadian support to help launch them into sustainable adulthood, our steady commitment is increasingly

## Special Thanks

We are grateful to so many people who make this project possible. We particularly want to recognize:

**Brendan Wood International**, which has supported Nikibasika with significant donations for the past 4 years. We are especially personally grateful to Brendan Wood and Stewart Borden for their tireless support.

The **Canada Africa Community Health Alliance**, especially Jean-Charles Le Vallée and Jimmy Sebulime, who provide advice and a lot of thankless administrative support on our financials.

The **Tri-Adventure team**, especially Blair Cox, Karen Beitel, Mohan Sharma and Raymond Helkio, among the many others who make an inspiring fundraiser every year.

## TO DONATE TO NIKIBASIKA:

Online: <http://cacha.ca/donate>

Make sure to choose Nikibasika in the dropdown project menu.

Mail:

Canada Africa Community Health Alliance  
1 Nicholas St., Suite 300  
Ottawa ON K1N 7B7

Make sure to write Nikibasika on the project line of your cheque.

Thank you!

Cate Creede, Danny Nashman & Carissa Reiniger, Co-Leads

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