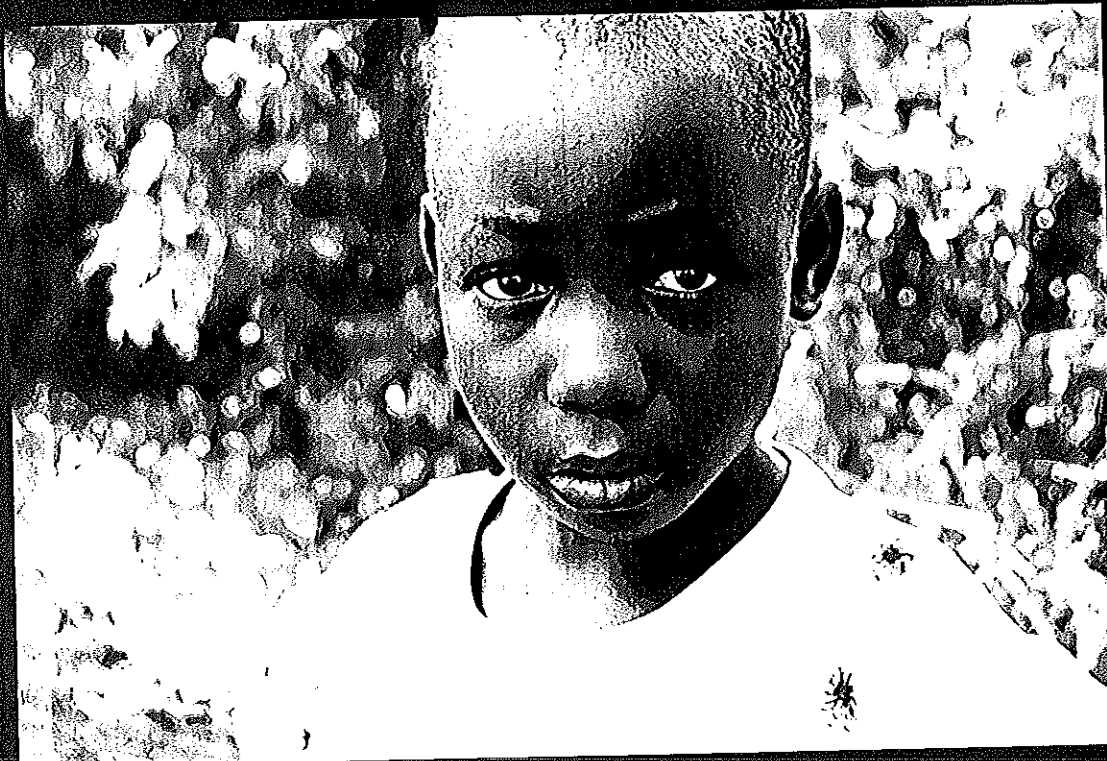


“Uganda’s Hidden Children”



**Causes, policies, public perceptions, schools
and services provided to children with
disadvantages and disabilities in the Republic
of Uganda**

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Forward

by
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My knowledge about Uganda, which at the beginning was not much, has increased exponentially throughout the past 5 years starting in July 2008. It was at that time that I made my first trip to Uganda with my husband, Louis Picard, and spent one week meeting the Pinto family, exploring Uganda and meeting many of Lou's former Ugandan acquaintances. It was unfortunate that I was not able to personally meet Manuel Pinto, who was a longtime friend of Lou's since the late 1960s, as he had met an unfortunate and untimely death April 2008—just a few months prior to our visit.

During our week visit to Uganda, the Pinto family had spoken of the many projects the late Manuel Pinto had been working on. One of the projects that meant very much to Manuel Pinto was Bright Kids Uganda Children's Home. He was the Co-Founder of the home along with Victoria Nalongo Namusisi, and we were invited to visit the home during our stay. We had the honor of meeting Victoria who is currently the Founder-Director of Bright Kids. It was overwhelming to meet so many children who were impacted by war, abandonment and poverty that it was difficult to fully grasp at that time what wonderful work Bright Kids was doing for these children. Upon returning to the US, we became more and more involved in the mission and day-to-day running of the home.

By 2013, after four additional trips to Uganda, our involvement with Bright Kids Uganda had increased measurably and also challenged us by opening doors to the many issues, concerns, joys and accomplishments Ugandans face on a daily basis. All of the Bright Kids children, who have been taken under Victoria's "wing" since Bright Kids began in 2000, are just a small percentage of Uganda's vulnerable population. This population has been and still is reeling from the effects of internal conflicts, extreme poverty, impacted by the scourge of HIV/AIDS, abandonment and gender violence. Victoria has provided these children with food, shelter, education, medical care and, most of all, a warm loving environment.

Prior to 2013, my exposure to children with disabilities in Uganda was extremely limited. At that time my only interaction had involved meeting Gloria Namusoke, a Bright Kids child who had severe disabilities. As time went on, her heart-wrenching story of her life became more and more apparent. At twelve years old, she entered school for the disabled for the first time in her life; within two weeks at her new school she died from possible neglect.

With my knowledge, interest and exposure to the challenges that vulnerable persons face in Uganda, I was invited to present a program focusing on Special Education in Uganda for the Division of International Special Education and Services (DISES), a branch of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) at a Round Table meeting held in Tobago, Trinidad June 2013. Having had a limited knowledge of Uganda special education services, schools and population, I embarked on research on this issue for our presentation. Through my research, I learned that

Uganda children who are disabled are truly the *Hidden Children*. Millions of Ugandans with disabilities are prevented from attending school, obtaining employment, stigmatized, considered a curse and are caught in the vicious and unbroken circle of poverty which leads to disability and back again to poverty – a never ending cycle.

I started writing this paper by citing statistics about Ugandans who are disabled, and I read and wrote about Uganda educational policies and laws to support the disabled. I began to understand about the lack of educational opportunities and the inability to access society. I discovered a long list of the causes of disability and was shocked to learn that a large percentage of disabilities could be prevented with vitamins, food, medical care and vaccinations. This was astounding. Millions are afflicted with blindness, cerebral palsy, loss of limbs, developmental delays and other preventable disabilities.

After presenting this paper on Uganda's Hidden Children, we returned to Uganda for five weeks to explore firsthand what was researched. After further research about these sobering facts, we could not fathom the reality of it. Were these children really a curse and stigmatized for life? During our time spent in Uganda during those 5 weeks, we visited schools for the blind and the disabled, as well as rural schools.

We also visited Soroti, in the northeastern part of Uganda—an area that was severely impacted by the Lord's Resistance Army rebels. There we met with several families who have children with disabilities and interviewed 27 blind children, including some whose parents are blind, as well.

During this time I met with administrators from universities that have special education teacher training programs, the Minister of Higher Education, non-profit centers, the National Union for Disabled Persons in Uganda and the Acid Survivors Foundation of Uganda. Everyone that I met had echoed and confirmed my research information on the seriousness of the special education issue in Uganda. Yes, there are policies and laws regarding special education, but they are not being implemented. Moreover, children do not attend school because of the lack of qualified teachers, facilities, teaching materials, transportation and access to inclusion in society. This population is considered a curse; families will provide medical care, vitamins and vaccinations to only the healthy family members, while the children with disabilities are hidden in back rooms – forgotten.

These meetings and visits convinced me that one must go beyond the laws and policies to understand both the problems and possible solutions. While mindful of the financial challenges of special needs education in a developing country, one can learn how to approach the problem from a human and grassroots perspective. The paper that follows takes a two track approach to this human challenge; it looks at the evolution of policies towards the disabled in Uganda but also tries to better understand at a human level the ways in which special needs can be addressed.

"Welcome to Uganda, the land of contradictions and once referred to by Winston Churchill, as the Pearl of Africa. A land flowing with milk and honey yet filled with millions who can't afford a single meal on their plates a day!! A land with so many beautiful and smiling faces amidst the suffering lot devastated by the more than 20 years of LRA insurgency in Northern Uganda coupled with HIV/AIDS which also engulfed the State within the same period." (Namusisi, 2013)

The Background

Overview

Children with special needs are a challenge to societies around the world. The challenge is particularly difficult in countries where governance is fragile, conflict is rife and social cohesion is weak or non-existent. This paper on special needs children will discuss Uganda's political and educational history, and how this history impacted children, particularly those with disabilities. We will discuss Uganda's educational policies regarding those with disabilities, and will focus on one example of a non-profit—Bright Kids Uganda—and what it is doing to help those who are disadvantaged and disabled.

Education and Political Development in Uganda

Education in Uganda has been in the hands of volunteer missionary groups since the late 19th century (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 40). Significant government control of the Ugandan education system has only been in existence since the middle of the 20th century and became operational when Uganda gained its independence from Great Britain in 1962. Political conflicts have negatively impacted education growth and social development in Uganda beginning with the British colonization. These continued through the instability of the Obote years, the civil strife during Idi Amin's regime and then with chaos of the Lord's Resistance Army. (Kasfir: 1976). A measure of stability and strategic planning has been introduced during the current administration of President Yoweri Museveni, who came to power in 1986.

The impacts from this political upheaval has forced Ugandans to flee their homes, live in extreme poverty, prevented them from pursuing an education and made them vulnerable to disease, malnutrition, and HIV/AIDS. This affected all ages, but the most vulnerable were, and still are, the children of Uganda. Many children were born with or developed disabilities malnutrition, disease, and child abandonment issues exacerbated by political instability in the country. Families and government see these children as a second generation of victims. They became Uganda's "Hidden Children."

A Short History of Education in Uganda

The development of education in Uganda began in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Protestant and Catholic missionaries came to Africa and set up mission outposts in Uganda and other parts of East and Central Africa (Oliver, 1965). In Uganda, Protestant and Catholic missions created a school education system with very little or no financial assistance from the Protectorate government (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 40).

The missionaries controlled the educational system until 1925. Their main objective was to make converts to their religion literate in their vernacular so they could read the Bible and other books published by the missionaries. In addition, the Catholic traditional leaders in the

Buganda Kingdom wanted their sons to attend the mission schools to prepare them for the changing outside world and for their responsibilities of becoming a chief (Low, 1971: 13-54).

By the early twentieth century, Ugandans had been given a choice of six different types of schools. Choices included so-called sub-schools in which there were no qualified staff and no supervision from an administration; Central Schools, which were day schools offering basic education; High Schools that were for both boys and girls (boys and girls were sent to same-sex boarding schools and girls were prepared to be housewives), and Colleges. In addition, there were maternity schools to train midwives and normal schools for teacher training (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 40-42).

One of the early international interventions in the education sector was by the Phelps-Stokes Fund USA, a philanthropic organization. Phelps-Stokes targeted the education and training of African Americans, Africans and American Indians. As part of their mandate, they worked with missionary societies in Britain and America and helped to create the African Educational Commission. (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 42).

In 1924 several African Education Commission members toured tropical Africa and carried out an assessment on the amount of education work that was being done and then went on to assess the education needs of the Ugandans. The report noted overall the mission schools had started well but there was a "weakness due to absence of a government department of education and government inspector of schools" (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 42). In addition, the Commission criticized educators for the "omission of teaching Agriculture, Health Science and Hygiene and the lack of provision for the instruction of women in the care of children" (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 43). This is a criticism that would resonate across the years.

There were several contemporary critics of the educational system at this time. They pointed out—not surprisingly—that the religious schools main focus was on evangelization, preparation for baptism and overall religious instruction. Schools at this point were inadequate, inefficient and not meeting the needs of the community.

Some criticized the exclusive literary focus of education, though there were some manual training and activities. Students were involved in school maintenance, construction, agriculture and animal projects. Critics also focused on the lack of inspection and supervision. To counter this criticism, the schools repeatedly explained that they lacked sufficient staff.

A related criticism targeted the curriculum, which did not relate to the African way of life in the village communities and encouraged students to seek employment outside of their villages. After migrating to the cities and towns, Ugandans were not eager to return to their village and agricultural way of life. (The above three paragraphs are based on Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 43-46).

Despite these criticisms, the missionaries succeeded in organizing a network of schools for both boys and girls in Uganda. The missionaries encouraged an interest in educational growth through a broad based system, where there were provisions for pupils to move from the lowest to the highest levels. Though they established a close link between religion and education, the missionaries also provided the Colonial Administration with a pool of clerical workers (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 46).

Protectorate Government Intervention

In 1925, the Protectorate government began to take control of the educational system. Eric. J. Hussey was selected to become the Director of Education and assumed his administrative duties as Director in 1925. The structure of the school system was changed. The sub grade schools still had unqualified staff and were not required to follow the syllabus. Elementary vernacular schools, however, followed the syllabus and taught in village life garden schools. Intermediate schools "A" and "B" were for the older children (B being for the most advanced). For advanced education, students could attend technical, teaching schools and Makerere College.

The Education Ordinance of 1927 further empowered the Director to make adjustments to school inspections, develop a new syllabus, register institutions, close schools not meeting requirements, register teachers and visit schools to inspect them at any time (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 47-50).

From 1925-1935, Ugandan education officials were concerned that there should be, in addition to academic training, a focus on vocational and agricultural training. Central Schools were established to provide vocational training. However, the Central Schools were abandoned in 1936 because they were thought inadequate for preparing students for leadership and career postings. (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 47-52).

Again in 1938, schools were reclassified. Sub grade level schools with unqualified staff were still prevalent. Qualified schools included the Primary vernacular, Primary schools, Junior schools, government technical schools, teacher training and Makerere College. A majority of the students ended their education after completion of the Primary vernacular level. World War II affected the education staff in all of the schools. Some missionary teachers had to leave, as they were called to serve in the military; educational money from overseas was diverted to the war effort; technical students were employed to repair war vehicles; and even the Boy Scouts were used to guard Kampala (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 52-55).

After 25 years of educational reform, the 1942 Education Ordinance was introduced to address the changes that had evolved since 1927. Important points of the law involved: school management, specific rules and duties for the headmaster, the establishment of District Boards, and the inspection and supervision of schools. The most important part of this law was that it empowered the governor to stipulate the conditions governing the financial aid grants (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 56).

Agricultural and Technical Schools

Agricultural training was still a part of the schools' curriculum through 1950. School gardens were a common sight in primary and secondary schools, as some schools offered agriculture instruction, and a number of farm schools were established. Some students were interested in pursuing agricultural studies, but for many, gardening was used as a punishment for misbehavior. Some parents were opposed to this practical training because it did not prepare the students for more prestigious clerical jobs (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 47-52).

Separate Agricultural and Technical schools existed during the colonial period, though they were unpopular. The regular school syllabus provided for agricultural courses and school gardens. In the beginning, there was an enthusiasm for such courses especially for those students who did not continue on into secondary education. People who could not find clerical jobs sometimes went back to the land and were helped with the courses they had taken in school, though the disadvantages far outweighed the advantages.

During school time, students were relegated to work long hours in the garden, perform boring tasks such as weeding and keeping the school areas clean. Taking care of the gardens was often used as a punishment. Students would view a farmer who cultivated the land as someone who had done something wrong, and thus agriculture was not held in high regard. Teachers were also not interested in teaching agricultural classes or teaching progressive farming skills. Students who did want to farm the land were not educationally equipped to start progressive farms.

Even though a majority of Ugandans were engaged in agriculture, education was seen as a means to escape the low paying agricultural jobs and open the door to the much preferred higher paying clerical white collar jobs. Eventually, on the eve of independence (1960), Farm Schools were abandoned. Technical schools followed the same path, as well, and were held in low esteem among students and families. Unmotivated teachers, who preferred teaching academic courses and inadequate course offerings, also deterred many from entering technical schools.

Technical students from the beginning were looked upon as not qualified to continue onto higher-level schools. Moreover, income from agriculture and technical jobs was much lower than for those who were employed in government and clerical jobs. World War II did provide skills needed for the war front, which was some incentive for those to attend technical schools. In addition, government departments offered technical training which enabled workers to be better trained with the assurance of keeping their employment (the above is based on Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 65 – 71).

Academic Education Levels

In Uganda, the school year runs from January through December. English is the language of instruction beginning in the first grade, though it is generally introduced at Primary 5 in most schools. Indigenous languages remain central to Ugandan communication. Languages such as Swahili are used by the military and police; Luganda is used in instruction in the south central regions, and in the first 4 years of schooling, instruction can be in Karimogon, Tesok, Lugbara, Luo, Runyankole, and Runyoro. English is tracked into the educational system gradually.

In order to move from one level to the next, students must pass national exams with high marks in order to proceed onto the next level. The Primary Leaving Examination is the first exam, and if passed with high grades, students can then proceed to the "O" level secondary schools. At the end of the four-year "O" level, students take an examination to receive the Uganda Certificate of Education.

Very high marks are needed for admission to "A" level institutions, government training institutes, technical colleges and grade three teacher-training colleges. They are the lucky ones who will be considered for additional educational opportunities. Students must earn the "Uganda Advanced Certificate" in order to be selected for universities, national teacher's colleges, technical colleges and government employment agencies (State University.Com, 2013).

Segregation and Social Disparities

In Uganda during the colonial period there were separate schools for Africans, Indians, Goans and Europeans resulting in racial segregation in education. (Castle, 1966: 46-51). Some children were allowed to attend other schools, but these were often more exceptions to the rule and not the norm. African children had the most difficulty getting into other (non-African) schools due to language differences and exclusionary policies.

Members of the 1957 Legislative Council addressed this segregation issue and called for the integration of schools. The leaders and the families of the different schools could not agree to accept students from other schools, especially the Asians and Europeans, as they felt it would lower their academic standards.

The integration of schools was only in effect on paper and only became a reality in 1963 after independence. During this time, private schools run by laypersons started to appear among the mission schools and government schools. The administrators of mission schools did not consider themselves "private" and were upset with the independent private schools because they did not teach religion; therefore they thought the students were receiving an inferior education. Despite this opposition, the private schools thrived because there was a real need for primary and secondary schools that were open to African students. Today there are

more private schools, especially on the secondary level, than government schools (see Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001:72-74 for a discussion of the above).

The mission school concept still survives and thrives in Uganda. For example, "The Anglican Church of Uganda operates over 969 primary schools, the Roman Catholic Church runs more than 1,146 primary schools, and there are approximately 200 Muslim schools....several Aga Khan and...Hindu schools" (State University.Com 2013). At the university level there are three Roman Catholic universities, several Anglican colleges, the Seventh Day Adventist College and faith-based Islamic University.

Uganda is a patriarchal, male-centric society resulting in disparities in education for females. Education for females lags behind with priority given to boys because boys were seen to be more enthusiastic to learn, have regular attendance and have a better chance of employment opportunities. Girls have and still do engage in domestic chores at an early age preparing themselves for early marriages, usually after the age of 13. Even those who are interested in pursuing an academic career usually ended up choosing between nursing and teaching. Historically, if a woman enters the teaching profession and then marries, she often leaves the profession (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 75-76).

Other disparities in Uganda included the education of Muslim children. Muslims historically "more or less stuck to the Koran system of schools. Some [Muslim] men [however] wanted their children to get the Western kind of education" (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 76). Thus, in some cases Muslims would go to the Protestant or Catholic schools.

This pattern of education changed over time, and some Muslim schools have now set up secular educational programs so that their children will have the same education and opportunities as other children receiving a secular education. There remain a significant number of "religious only" Muslim schools in Uganda (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 76 -78).

Independence: The Uganda Government takes control of education

In 1962, Uganda gained independence from Great Britain. A year later the Castle Education Committee was tasked with visualizing the needs of Uganda as an independent state and recommending a school system to meet those needs (Castle Report, 1963). The Commission found that there was a need to have government control over all schools, including religious and secular private schools. In addition, there was a clear need for curriculum and organizational change.

The Castle Commission recommended revising the organizational structure of the schools. They recommended that primary schools be seven years, significant syllabus revisions, and the establishment of four levels of post primary schools including High School, Secondary School, Technical School and Farm schools.

There were shortcomings to these recommendations, such as a lack of financial and manpower resources to fund and support the recommendations. However, there were positive results, such as an increase in the quality of primary level education, as well as an increase in the number of students. It was at this time that (except in Buganda) the central and local government became responsible for educational standards in Uganda, rather than the volunteer agencies (mission schools) (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 148 -150). Buganda schools were integrated into the central government in late 1966 after the overthrow of the Kabaka.

Unhappiness with Education in Uganda

After the Castle Report, the 1960s and 1970s saw educational improvements. There was an increase in number of students attending school, an improved curriculum, and improved teacher training, yet there were still many challenges to overcome. Foreigners continued to be employed in teaching positions because there were not enough qualified Ugandan teachers available. Often these foreigners could not relate to Ugandan cultural life nor stay longer than a few years.

Secondary Schools were increasingly in demand and as a result, many poorly staffed schools popped up. There were complaints that the programs focused on academic curricula, in which only a select few could succeed. There was an intense focus on passing multiple exams so that graduates could apply for white-collar jobs; this stifled initiative. The volunteer agencies (and mission schools) had their own educational secretary general, thus there was rivalry between and among them.

In 1964, all secondary schools came under the direct control of the central government (except in Buganda), which was met with strong resistance from the Volunteer schools. The Peace Corps, Volunteer Service Overseas from Britain, Denmark, Germany and Norway sent many to teach in the secondary schools because the government had a difficult time staffing the schools with Ugandans.

Secondary school education became very expensive to fund and Uganda had to rely on government secured loans from the World Bank, the USA, and Britain. Though private schools increased in numbers, some were not run well. Curriculum reform remained a concern on the primary level, requiring changing the syllabus, training teachers, and purchasing new education materials. Curriculum reform on the secondary level focused on the Cambridge School Certificate (later the Uganda School Certificate), which required a high pass to enter post-secondary education. As a result, students manipulated the classes they took in order to perform better on the exam.

Despite these challenges, and the increasing political instability in the country after 1970 (to be discussed below), education reform continued. Changes were made, and students were offered a better education taught by an increasing number of qualified teachers (Ssekamwa and Lugumba, 2001: 150-160).

Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) – realities and facts

The Problem

Throughout the development of education in Uganda, debates about the quality and quantity of school management and inspections, curriculum reforms, literary versus technical and agricultural schools, gender concerns, segregation and racial discrimination in schools, and language barriers have been discussed and debated. However, there is one student population area that was not mentioned: children who have a cognitive, physical or emotional disability. There has been almost no mention of schools to meet the needs of these children. Who is teaching them? What has been done to teach and service children with disabilities? Where are they?

In fact there are many Ugandans, both children and adults, who are Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). According to donor surveys and the 2002 Uganda Population and Housing Census (See "Disability Facts," 2013 and "Inclusion of People with Disabilities, 2009), 16% of the population is disabled in some way (approximately 5 million disabled out of 30 million Ugandans).

Only 2.2% of PWDs in Uganda have attained post-secondary level education. Approximately 90% of PWDs in Uganda do not go beyond primary education. PWDs who are out of school are four times more than those in school (Uganda Population and Housing Census cited in "Disability Facts," 2013). Over 60% of PWDs in Uganda do not receive any kind of educational rehabilitation (Uganda Household Survey 2005/2007 cited in "Disability Facts, 2013).

According to Uganda Population and Housing Census (2002), "one in every 25 persons has a disability... in seeing, hearing, speech, moving and learning" (Government of Uganda, 2006: i). The population of those with disabilities is not evenly distributed throughout the country. Compared to the 1991 Census the 2000 Uganda Population and Housing Census Report states that in the Central region, the rate of those with disabilities increased from 1% to 3.1%. The increase was 1.2% to 3.6% in the Eastern region, .9% to 2.9% in the Western region and in Northern region from 1.9% to 4.4%. At least 46% of the PWDs are living in poverty (Government of Uganda, 2006: 2 and 4).

The number of blind people in Uganda has shot up to 1 million from 700,000 people in 2008 (Uganda Radio Network, 2009). According to Johannes G. Hooegeveen, it is likely that people who stay in a household that has a disabled person at the head, are 38% more likely to stay living in poverty than those who stay in an impoverished household with a non-disabled head (Hooegeveen, 2004: 21-22). In 2010 more than 50% of the children with disabilities in northern Uganda were not going to school (Global Movement for Children, 2010).

Causes of Disabilities observed in Uganda

Disabilities observed in Uganda are similar to disabilities seen in the rest of the world. The National Policy on Disability in Uganda, (see Government of Uganda, 2006: 1-2), noted 14 observed disabilities. (See Box 1 for a summary). The profound political instability and Uganda's conflicts have exacerbated what would already be a tragic record because of Uganda's extreme poverty.

Wars and civil strife include the atrocities committed during the Idi Amin and Obote political regimes and the twenty-year civil war in northern Uganda. The northern and eastern regions of Uganda are the areas that were most affected by the 20 year conflict with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony, and these areas have the highest incidence of disability rates. For over twenty years, the LRA rebel groups wrecked havoc in northern Uganda. (Allen and Vlassenroot, 2010; Eichstaedt, 2009; Green, 2009 and Tripp, 2010).

Box 1

Disabilities in Uganda (If no percentage is indicated, it is unknown)

Difficulty in hearing, 15.1%
Difficulty in speaking and conveying messages, 3.9%
Difficulty in moving around and using other body parts
Most commonly observed is loss and limited use of limbs 35.3%
Spine injuries 22.3%
Difficulty in seeing 6.7%
Strange behavior
Epilepsy
Difficulty in learning
Mental retardation 3.6%
Mental illness 3.6%
Leprosy
Loss of feeling
Multiple disabilities

The effects of fighting forced Ugandans to live in extreme poverty, and many were malnourished without access to human security needs, such as shelter, food, education and medical care. Poverty, which results in malnutrition, forces people to live in slums, resulting in stunted growth, intellectual and physical development and related developmental delays. Civil strife also causes disabilities from "urban crime, domestic violence, cattle rustling, terrorism, and proliferation of small and light weapons" (Government of Uganda, 2006: 5). Additional causes were loss of limbs due to accidents, war, and leprosy (these are the most commonly observed). This vulnerable segment of society is further negatively impacted by HIV/AIDs, child abandonment and gender violence (Government of Uganda, 2006: 7-8).

The National Policy on Disabilities (Government of Uganda, 2006: 1-2) has stated that many of the above disabilities are tied in together and interrelated.

The National Policy lists thirteen causes for disabilities. The major causes are:

- Congenital or peri-natal disturbances (mental retardation, somatic hereditary defects and non-genetic disorders)
- Communicable diseases (poliomyelitis, trachoma, leprosy, measles)
- Non-communicable disease
- Functional psychiatric disturbances
- Alcoholism
- Drug abuse
- Wars and civil-strife
- Trauma, injury and accidents
- Malnutrition

It is worth noting that in addition to the above observed disabilities, females are classified as a "disadvantaged group" (State University.Com, 2013) and are considered a part of the "disabled" category of people.

Cataracts are said to be the leading cause of blindness and accounts for 40% of the blindness in Uganda. Many patients fail to seek medical treatment from an eye specialist. Blindness causes that are preventable are: cataracts, Vitamin A deficiency, trachoma, river blindness, measles and injuries on the eyes caused by bacteria, viruses and fungus (Uganda Radio Network (2009).

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), poverty and disability are clearly interlinked, with disability being both a cause and a consequence of poverty. Cerebral palsy, for example, is evident in over a million children, most likely due to lack of oxygen at birth because of the lack of skilled birthing attendants (Moyi, 2012: 2). This is a never-ending cycle.

It is clear that the situation of persons with disabilities in Uganda has been made much more difficult by poverty, illiteracy, war and political instability as well as by varying degrees of negative attitudes among society and its social, political and cultural leaders. Those with disabilities are stigmatized, ignored and kept behind doors within the community "arising from fear, ignorance, superstitions, neglect, and lack of awareness," (Government of Uganda, 2006: 3) and thereby becoming Uganda's "Hidden Children."

Ugandan Education Policies addressing those with Disabilities

Since independence, the Ugandan government has legislated many educational policies and laws to take stronger control over education in Uganda. However, these were often

thwarted by lack of financial resources and political instability in the country. In the 1960's there was a lack of finances to fund improvements of schools. Idi Amin, Uganda's military dictator and authoritarian President (1971-1979) significantly downplayed education; he did not go beyond grade three of primary school. His budget only allocated 10% to education. In comparison, under the current President of Uganda, university educated Yoweri Museveni (who has been president since 1985) the budget allocation to education is 23% (State University.Com, 2013).

The quality of education has improved under Museveni's presidency. The government has turned its attention to those with disabilities, recognizing that these children were not getting the education that they deserved. According to Swedberg (2011), it wasn't until 1983 that the "Ministry of Education and Sports established a unit for special needs education" and in a little more than 10 years later, in 1995, the Ugandan constitution made "education a basic right for all Ugandan children."

Article 21 of the Ugandan constitution prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities (according to the International Labour Organization, 2009). It recognizes "the rights of PWDs (Persons with Disabilities) to respect and human dignity" (Government of Uganda, 2006: 9) and provides the basis for the enactment of laws and development of policies that address their concerns. The National Policy on Disability in Uganda states, "the constitution of the Republic of Uganda stipulates the need to empower and provide equal opportunities to PWDs" (Government of Uganda, 2006: 9). There was a real need to update the constitution to make education a basic right for all Ugandan children, to enact laws, develop policies and most importantly find ways to implement them.

Nine pieces of legislation were enacted from 1996 to 2003 to "take affirmative action to redress the imbalances that exist against PWDs" (Government of Uganda, 2006: 9). These laws are summarized in Box Two below.

Box Two:

Laws Targeting Persons with Disabilities

1. Beginning in 1996, two statutes addressed Parliamentary representation and assessment of children with Disabilities. The Parliamentary Elections Statute provides for five representatives of PWDs in Parliament and the Children's Statute stipulated "early assessment of disabilities among children for appropriate treatment, rehabilitation and education"
2. In 1997, advances were made to address the rights of all children to an education. In the Local Governments Act, female and male PWDs were provided representation at the local government level.

3. The Uganda Communications Act of 1997 provided for development of techniques and technologies for PWDs to access communications services.
4. The Universal Primary Education Act provided primary school education for up to four children from each Ugandan family (Uganda). Children with disabilities were given top priority (Moyi, 2012: 2). Since the government provided free education to all children in primary schools, it made it financially possible for families to send their children to school. The program resulted in the doubling of primary school enrollment in a period of two years (State University.Com, 2013).
5. Three acts in 1998 addressed the training of teachers and land and driving discrimination.
 - a. The UNISE Act of 1998 provided for the training of teachers and special education teachers for children with special needs.
 - b. The Land Act declared all PWD land transactions to be null and void if there is evidence of discrimination.
 - c. The Traffic and Road Safety Act addressed the prohibition of denial of a driving permit based on disabilities (Government of Uganda, 2006: 10).
6. After 2000, several additional acts were passed, including the Workers Compensation Act, passed in 2000, which provided compensation for workers disabled due to industrial accidents (International Labour Organization, 2009: 2).
7. In 2003, the National Council for Disability Act was passed to monitor and evaluate the rights of persons with disabilities as they are set out in international conventions and legal instruments, the Uganda Constitution and other laws (International Labour Organization, 2009: 2)
8. The Persons with Disabilities Act of 2006 made "provisions for the elimination of all forms of discriminations against people with disabilities and towards equal opportunities... provides for a tax reduction of 15% to private employers who employ ten or more PWDs either as regular employees, apprentices or learners on a full time basis" (International Labour Organization, 2009:2)
9. The National Policy of Uganda as of 2006 created a "mandate to promote and protect the rights of PWDs" (Government of Uganda, 2006: i), aims to promote equal opportunities, and will contribute to the improvements of the quality of life of PWDs through interventions. This policy "provides a human rights-based framework for responding to the needs of the PWDs." International Labour Organization, 2009: 2). The National Policy on Disability in Uganda is guided by the following principles:

- a) Family and Community Based Care, which recognizes the family as the basic unit for providing care and support for the PWDs.
- b) Human Rights Based Care seeks to minimize discrimination of the PWDs.
- c) Participation of PWDs and their caretakers planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluation of their care.
- d) Multi-sector Collaboration where every stakeholder should undertake responsibility of mainstreaming disability concerns and build partnerships and networks with PWDs households, communities and other networking units.
- e) Capacity Building of PWDs, caregivers, communities and service providers.
- f) A decentralizing of service delivery
- g) Good Governance
- h) Encourage co-existence that promotes social inclusion of PWDs among the people (See Government of Uganda, 2006: 13-14 for the above).

The Government of Uganda's policies on disability after 2006 created a vision of a society where PWDs were fully integrated and able to participate in all spheres of social and economic life. The goal was to provide a "framework for PWD empowerment" and its values were to enable PWDs "to lead independent and productive lives." (Swabb, 2012).

Some of the objectives included: creating an environment for PWD participation, promoting effective service delivery, mobilizing and effectively utilizing resources, enhancing and building the capacity of PWDs and their caregivers (Quotes from Government of Uganda, 2006: 15). The policies were enlightened and comprehensive, however, Uganda, (as with other less developed countries), was unable to implement these policies. It is this issue that we address in this paper.

There are several strategies (Government of Uganda, 2006: 15-17) that were to be used to meet these objectives, all of them difficult to carry out. These included:

- provide adequate resources,
- advocate cultural values that foster understanding, care and support,
- strengthen and empower the PWDs, provide capacity building and skills development so PWDs can fully participate,
- implement PWD participation in planning, implementing , monitoring and evaluating,

- lobby all other sectors and stakeholders to address PWDs' concerns, implement interventions,
- develop and promote PWD cultural activities and sports events,
- establish databases, promote awareness of same disability impact on males and females,
- promote development of social security,
- develop (and implement) the media to bring out awareness on PWDs issues.

In 2007, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funded an initiative known as the UNITY project (a project to address special needs children). The UNITY project was to work with the Ministry of Education and Sports to "implement a series of initiatives aimed at establishing, mainstreaming and institutionalizing special needs programs throughout the Uganda education system" (Swedberg, 2011). Martin Omagor, the Commissioner of Special Needs and Inclusive Education at the Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports, became aware of the benefits of the inclusive school environment as a child when he attended an inclusive school with students who were blind. As Commissioner, with this experience in mind, he wanted to raise the issue for a special needs policy with international donors. USAID responded, and the UNITY project was developed (Creative Associates, 2013).

In 2008, with UNITY support, the Uganda curriculum was adapted to target gaps in special needs education. The new curriculum also provided teacher training, raised awareness and mobilized PWDs' parents, community-based organizations, health service providers and government leaders (Swedberg, 2011). Also in 2008, the Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training Act promoted equal access to education and training for all disadvantaged groups, including disabled people (International Labour Organization, 2009).

In 2010 UNITY's support was received favorably among the teachers who were initially trained, and these teachers asked for additional training to address how to teach children with visual and hearing impairments, mental retardation and dyslexia (Swedberg, 2011). Moreover, schools were encouraged to employ interventions and make an inclusive environment for PWDs in educational programs. By 2013, USAID's UNITY project was pioneering the steps to reach out to children with special learning needs.

The Education Sector Strategic Plan began in 2004 and continues through 2015. The plan recognized the obstacles facing children with disabilities and proposed a way forward for Uganda in terms of disabilities policy (Moyi, 2012: 3). According to the National Policy on Disability in Uganda, the 2025 Uganda Vision for PWDs was for them to have both easy access to basic infrastructures and other social amenities and user-friendly technology, information, basic infrastructure and other social facilities (Government of Uganda, 2006: 10).

The legislative record in Uganda suggests education officials recognize that there is a strong link between poverty and disabilities. The Poverty Eradication Action Program (PEAP) established a framework to break this cycle. The framework is to guide the public in eradicating poverty, to mobilize and empower vulnerable groups to participate in the economic growth and

social development processes and to ensure PWDs full participation and benefit from this program's initiatives (Government of Uganda, 2006: 10-11). What educators and policy makers may not be fully aware of is the extent to which poverty and limited resources create a disconnect between policymaking and its implementation in the field of human resource development in targeting special needs populations. The result is a policy implementation failure.

Organizations for Persons with Disabilities

Box 3

NGOs Targeting Persons with Disabilities

A. Organizations of Persons with Disabilities

- The National Union of Disabled Persons
- The National Union of Women with Disabilities
- Uganda National Association for the Blind
- Uganda National Association of the Deaf
- Disabled Women Network and Resource Organization
- Uganda Disabled Women's Association

B. Organizations for Persons with Disabilities

- Uganda Mental Health Association
- Uganda Parents Care for the Mentally Handicapped
- Uganda National Action on Physical Disability acts as an umbrella organization of/for people with disabilities
- Uganda Parents' Association of Children with Learning Disabilities
- Spinal Injury Association
- Epilepsy Support Association of Uganda
- National Association of the Deaf/Blind

There are several Uganda ministries that are responsible for disability issues. This disaggregation of responsibility makes policy coordination difficult. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) is the lead agency on special needs (Government of Uganda, 2006: 23), and the Department for Disabled Persons under the MGLSD has the primary responsibility for registration, vocational rehabilitation and coordination of employment for person with disabilities (International Labour Organization, 2009: 2).

The MGLSD also coordinates the Uganda Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Programme. The CBR was established for the rehabilitation, the equalization of opportunities and the social inclusion of all children and adults with disabilities needs. The Ministry of Education and Sports is charged with disability issues relating to education. The Special Needs Education unit (SNE) is under this Ministry and is mandated to address issues of children with learning difficulties. The third ministry involved with special needs issues is the Ministry of State for Elderly and Disability Affairs (Government of Uganda, 2006 and International Labour Organization, 2009).

The third ministry involved with special needs issues is the Ministry of State for Elderly and Disability Affairs (Government of Uganda, 2006 and International Labour Organization, 2009). In addition to the Ugandan ministries addressing the needs of the PWDs, there are several organizations of and for persons with disabilities (See Box 3 above). (International Labour Organization, 2009: 3).

Obstacles Faced by Persons with Disabilities

PWDs face many obstacles in Uganda. During the conflicts and emergencies, they suffered the "brunt of the calamity" and were "often powerless, excluded and marginalized" (Government of Uganda, 2006: 5). Major obstacles, as we have noted, are poverty, education, lack of skills, high unemployment, conflicts, emergencies and age. These challenges exacerbate issues with accessing services. The inability of public institutions to implement their own policies with regard to special needs is the key to understanding the dilemma of special needs.

Many buildings in Uganda do not have facilities such as ramps or lifts; there are no talking devices for the blind; and buildings still have physical barriers. There are programs of family tracing and resettlement to reunite displaced family members, but the government still lacks strategies and the resources to address the particular needs of PWDs during conflict and emergencies. The Uganda National Minimum Health Care package is set up to "ensure that the people of Uganda receive essential services." However, the "high cost of health services, assistive devices, negative attitudes of some health staff, unfriendly infrastructure and equipment designs and long distances to travel to these health centers creates obstacles for PWDs when they seek services, or make attempts to seek services" (both quotes from Government of Uganda, 2006: 4-9).

PWDs also face problems with unemployment. Uganda's effective unemployment is over 30%, and youth unemployment is over 60%. A majority of PWDs are unemployed, as they are not even given a chance to compete for jobs with those who are not disabled. Limited vocational and training programs for PWDs have been established, however, they are "limited in scope and no longer meet current market employable skills requirement" (Government of Uganda, 2006: 6).

Most PWDs do not have access to regular incomes, thus many do not have pensions or insurance services. For the majority of PWDs who remain unemployed and under employed;

there is no effective National Employment Policy which has precluded affirmative action (Government of Uganda, 2006: 6).

PWDs face social obstacles as well. There is a social stigma attached to all PWDs. They are the most vulnerable because of their impairment and have to face "negative societal attitudes arising from fear, ignorance, superstitions, neglect and lack of awareness" (Government of Uganda, 2006: 3).

In Gulu, in northern Uganda, the government pursued an inclusive education policy, though schools had not received the necessary support to implement their programs. These schools lacked the basic facilities to support them, such as wheelchair ramps, classroom furniture, toilets and Braille materials for the blind and hearing aids for the deaf. The facilities thus have become largely inaccessible (Global Movement for Children, 2010).

Other obstacles include overcrowded classrooms, lack of up-to-date textbooks, or access to technology or challenges at home (Creative Associates, 2013). These obstacles can become real barriers for those with disabilities and leave them behind without appropriate help in schools. Many PWDs fall behind and are discouraged by repeated failure, thus dropping out of school altogether. Families deliberately keep their children with special needs at home to protect them from being shunned and bullied. Without an education and thus being unemployed, these children become vulnerable to being lured into drugs and exposed to HIV/AIDS (Creative Associates, 2013).

Educational obstacles include: a lack of qualified special education teachers, the need to travel long distances from home to schools, and the reluctance by parents and caretakers to take the children to school. Some special education teachers have been trained but lack the motivation to instruct students with disabilities. The special education teachers are paid the same salary as regular teachers but have a heavier workload. For example, a special needs teacher has to translate the same lesson plan used to teach other children into Braille for access by the blind (Global Movement for Children, 2010).

Finally, as we have noted, women in Uganda are classified as a 'disadvantaged' group, "along with orphans, migrants, poor students and the disabled" (Julia Fleuret quoted in State University.com, 2013). Girls drop out of school at a higher rate than boys as they reach higher levels. Uganda communities often think that boys will make more significant economic contributions in the future and thus need more training.

Some ethnic groups in Uganda (as in many parts of the world) believe that girls are trained to work in the home, to marry and raise a family and not seek a career. Girls often marry early and do not access education, especially in the rural areas. There are signs of change, as educated women will care for aged parents if they have a steady job, while boys will spend money on their wives' education. President Museveni says he favors sex equity because many female soldiers fought with him when liberating Uganda from Idi Amin (State University.Com, 2013). The Uganda government has used "affirmative action to benefit all

PWDs, particularly women and girls...in the areas of land policies, marriage divorce laws, inheritance, and domestic violence" (Government of Uganda, 2006: 8), though this is still a challenge.

Peter Moyi, a University of South Carolina professor, wrote a paper assessing access to education for children with disabilities in Uganda and concluded: "Obstacles to universal education in sub-Saharan Africa can be found outside the immediate reach of the education sector" (Moyi, 2012:11). His findings suggest, as do the findings of many researchers, that obstacles include violence and political instability, extreme poverty, HIV and AIDS, corruption and the ineffective use of resources. (See Moyi, 2012: 11). As we have seen, poverty and conflict have both been directly linked to physical and mental disabilities. Moyi argues that disabled children require extra attention in order to comprehend, reach literacy and numeracy, and that this extra attention requires resources that may not be available in countries with limited resources like Uganda (Moyi 2012: 11).

Surveys to provide data for studies may be unreliable because the information was self-reporting. Given the stigma associated with disabilities, it is likely that most households may be ashamed of their disabled children, and many do not acknowledge them (Moyi, 2012: 11). Children with disabilities are less likely to enroll in school, attend school and complete Grade 5. The schools, especially in rural and slum areas, are physically inaccessible to some children with disabilities; resources in rural schools are extremely inadequate. For those disabled children who do enroll in school, grade progression is very poor. Overall, Grade 5 completion is low for all children in Uganda, but it is significantly lower for children with disabilities. This is due to the school's limited resources, lack of proper assessments, poorly trained teachers and limited parental support (Krinstensen et al, 2006 and Moyi, 2012: 11)

Vision disabilities and some forms of physical disabilities carry less of a stigma and require fewer resources at school. Children who have difficulty with self-care require more resources and carry a greater stigma. Impairments that affect communication and interaction in ways that are common in mainstream schools can impose particularly high practical and social obstacles in participation in education. (Moyi, 2012: 12).

Moyi (2012) argues that parental support is another obstacle. Many parents do not visit their children once they had been admitted to a special school; neither do they take the children home on school vacations. Without parental support these children are unlikely to have success in school. Disabled children are usually in schools that are underfunded and lack educational materials, yet the parents have to pay high fees. This may explain why many households are reluctant to enroll their disabled children in schools. Fewer disabled children, especially those with severe disabilities, enroll in school on time and when they do enroll, very few successfully progress through school. Overall, children with disabilities have a significantly greater probability of not enrolling in school and of being out of school.

Policy Failure and Civil Society Initiatives
Examples of Three Individuals

Uganda has a national and legal planning framework, but it is not implemented nationally or locally. Moreover, many of the PWDs are not receiving services, rehabilitation support or access to educational opportunities. The Ugandan government's greatest challenge is "providing resources and materials to serve all of the disabled children (and) will require increased financing to train teachers, provide educational materials and assistive devices like hearing aids and financial support for families" (Moyi, 2012: 12). The 2006 National Policy on Disability in Uganda states that there is inadequate access to services, information, resources as well as limited participation in the socio-economic development process. Consequently, the majority depends on their families and communities for survival.

In Uganda, despite existing programs, there is a scarcity of appropriate educational, scholastic and instructional materials, inadequate training of staff, concerns of PWDs, outdated and limited skills in vocational centers, inaccessible physical structures at schools, high costs of assistive devices and services, guides, helpers and interpreters. Most importantly, PWD education and skills training is limited by a scarcity of resources.

During a video interview between Director of Bright Kids Uganda Victoria Nalongo and Silver Onyu, a teacher for the blind in Soroti, both agreed that Uganda never had specific laws targeting the disabled or a strategy of implementing policies in place. There are laws against child labor; they identify people who are using kids to work commercially; and laws that force parents to get their children to school. Looking at unprotected children with disabilities, there are no accurate statistics available on the number of children with disabilities. Nalongo states, "Kids (with disabilities) are kept in the background... [and] the Government of Uganda has yet to come up with a law on education rights of children with disabilities; there is no law for accommodations. The Ugandan government has to come out with a law". According to Nalongo, "Children with disabilities are treated like goats and kept in the back rooms."

The Uganda government is not meeting the needs nor providing services for those with disabilities. As a result, private organizations and individuals have been established to fill this void. Given the lack of resources, lessons can best be drawn from these individuals and organizations that are trying to fill the gap where government fails to support efforts for PWDs.

In the remainder of this paper, we examine here three individuals who have recognized the need to support PWDs and are (or in one case, was) trying to do something about it. They have been and are making a difference in Uganda by supporting and making attempts to implement new changes in the government policies regarding the educational rights for the disabled and those who are vulnerable and by providing examples of how to tackle these problems. The three individuals are Silver Francis Onyu, the late Manuel X. Pinto, and Victoria Nalongo Namusisi.

Silver Francis Oonyu

Pauline Greenlick interviewed Silver Oonyu on video in Soroti, Uganda, in July, 2012 and again in July 2013. During the interviews, Oonyu talked about his life and plans to build an inclusive school for the blind. Born in the northeastern Ugandan rural area near Soroti, Oonyu spoke about how the area was severely affected by civil strife during the Idi Amin years and then with a vengeance by the rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army.

Oonyu's family experienced much violence and death during this time. In addition to the political terrors he experienced, Silver also was afflicted with a personal terror. At age four, he contracted measles and was blinded, thus changing his life forever. Living in rural poverty exacerbated by conflicts created the recipe for his own personal disaster as his family did not have access to medical care nor could they afford vaccinations. Thus, Silver Oonyu became one of the millions of people with disabilities in Uganda.

At school, as a youngster, he was just one of the hundred or so students in one classroom. The teachers did not know what to do with him, as they were not trained. Moreover, they did not have the time to teach those with blindness. Teachers would beat him just because he would move to the front of the classroom to try to see. At this point, Silver Oonyu became a PWD statistic, firmly enmeshed in the many percentages cited for disability causes and caught up in the never-ending cycle of poverty and disability.

During the period of Idi Amin's government, missionaries who were brave enough to stay traveled through Silver's village area. His mother brought chickens and cassava to the missionaries, and they inquired about his blindness. They asked if he would come to their school, St. Francis School for the Blind, which is located near Soroti, after fighting stopped. The conflict did end; and, remembering their promise, he went to St. Francis and was able to enroll in their school.

Teachers noted Silver's Oonyu's inquisitiveness and desire to learn. He excelled in all subjects and passed exams with scores that were unheard of for those with blindness. After successfully completing and passing his rigorous exams, he knew that he was a candidate to continue his studies to become a teacher and that his scores were high enough to be accepted at Makerere University in Kampala.

After successfully completing his undergraduate work at Makerere, Silver was still interested in pursuing further education. He applied for a Ford Fellowship, which would enable him to study abroad. He recalled that his application process was difficult and said it was a "tug of war" to apply, as the applications were online. Not only did Oonyu come from the rural areas and had never seen or used a laptop nor did he know anything about a computer, let alone not be able to see. Eventually he did overcome these obstacles, and was accepted into the University of Pittsburgh's School of Education as a Ford Foundation Fellow.

After spending two years earning his masters in Vision Studies, he returned to Uganda in the summer of 2012 with the goal of opening a school for the blind and vulnerable. His dream is to establish an inclusive school, including physically disabled and able-bodied children as well as those with mental disabilities. He has an active team of supporters consisting of a social worker, a nurse (his wife), teachers and healthcare workers, as well as a person whose focus is in child protection. He also wants the families of the blind children to receive education. He says he has a feeling for the blind and deaf and would like to see them empowered.

In order to begin planning for his school, Silver Oonyu needed employment to support himself and his family. Through emails Silver expressed his disappointment in the reality and difficulties of seeking employment. For instance, he feels that he was discriminated against because he was blind, despite his Bachelor's and Master's degrees and all of the Uganda laws and policies prohibiting job discrimination.

Silver eventually was able to find a job teaching the blind at the school he attended as a young boy, St. Francis Secondary School for the Blind. He teaches Braille and the technology of writing for the blind. The school also has a primary section, the Madera School for the Blind. Both lack the skills and the resources needed to deliver specialized programs for the vision impaired. Silver notes that there were very few teachers who specialized in teaching Braille in Uganda. He is the only one out of 16 teachers in his school that is qualified to teach the blind.

Silver Oonyu is critical of the fact that his fellow teachers do not know how to use Braille, yet they are teachers of blind children. He is trying to address these technological challenges and is also now teaching blind students how to use computers. Even though each child has a computer, the students are just learning the proper placement of their fingers. However, since there is no audio available on the equipment, the students are unaware if they are pressing the correct key or writing the words.

Silver shared two stories about the students he teaches. One blind student, despite the fact that the school admitted her, was not given any attention. Another student cannot speak well. During one incident, a phone was misplaced in school. In response to the student being unable to express himself, a teacher tortured, molested, tied up the student with ropes, threatening to shoot him with a gun. Silver Oonyu faces many challenges in meeting his goal because there are many people in the area who are blind.

Blindness is a very serious issue in the northern and northeastern region of Uganda. Many families, including parents and their children, are blind. Silver has told us that right now there is a village called Omudikiok, which means blindness in Ateso language, about two kilometers away from Soroti. Many persons in that village are suffering from blindness and have not benefitted from the government's program of inclusive education. This, in large part, he says, is part of a negative cultural attitude towards children with blindness.

Silver Oonyu hopes to address these issues as he moves toward the development of his new school. He is definitely working from the "bottom up" to help children with disabilities because the government laws and policies are not being implemented.

Manuel Xavier Pinto

Manuel Pinto had a wide career that spanned education, business and then politics in Uganda. He began as a teacher in the Aga Khan Secondary School located in Masaka, Uganda in the early 1960s. After teaching several years, Pinto's career turned toward business. He was appointed Station Manager of Trans World Airlines in 1967, and in the early 1970s he was the Operations Manager of Esso Standard Uganda Limited. After Idi Amin came to power, he was arrested and threatened with imprisonment or death and then forced into exile, along with his family. He lived in Kenya for ten years.

After Idi Amin was ousted from Uganda, Pinto returned to Uganda and entered politics. He served twelve years as an elected representative of the people in Uganda's Legislature. From 1992-1994, he was the Director General of Uganda HIV/AIDS Commission. During that time he was appointed Minister of State for Internal Affairs. In 2004 through 2008, he worked for the Parliamentary Commission as coordinator of Planning and Development of Uganda's Parliament.

In addition to his government appointments, Manuel Pinto was also the Chief Scout of Uganda and had been a life-long supporter of the Scouting movement in Uganda. Tragically, his life was cut short by a tragic accident in April 2008 when working on his own car, his car slipped and rolled over him as he was repairing it. All of Uganda mourned his loss and he is still remembered to this day.

In Pinto's position as the Chief Scout of Uganda, he became aware of the challenges faced by children with special needs and worked with Victoria Nalongo Namusisi on a strategy for addressing the needs of vulnerable children from the bottom up. Along with Victoria Nalongo, he founded what later became Bright Kids Uganda, served as the chair of its Board and worked to generate financial support for the Bright Kids project. (His full life story can be accessed on the Bright Kids Uganda website under "*Manuel Pinto Memorial Scholarship Fund*").

Victoria Nalongo Namusisi

Victoria Nalongo Namusisi is the Co-Founder (along with the late Manuel Pinto) and Director of Bright Kids Uganda Children's Home located in the rural areas near Entebbe, Uganda. During interviews conducted in July 2012 and 2013, Victoria Nalongo talked about her life as a child and the challenges she had to overcome to become an empowered and successful journalist, government leader and now director of a children's home. Below are excerpts from the interview between Nalongo and Pauline Greenlick, as well as material from 2012 and 2013 emails.

Victoria Nalongo was born in rural Uganda near the shores of Lake Victoria. Her parent's family came from the Sesse Islands located in Lake Victoria. Her family's main source of income came from her father who fished from the waters of Lake Victoria. They lived in poverty, though her father provided for his family through fishing the waters in all types of weather—rain, intense heat and unrelenting sun.

Victoria Nalongo knew how hard her father toiled day after day, and she remembers most how much her father wanted her and her siblings to have an education so they would not have to work the waters like he did. He encouraged all of them to go to school, despite the fact that there was no money for their education. Victoria Nalongo remembers her father bringing fish to the Kasubi Monastery, where her brother attended school. The fish were a substitute for some of her brother's school fees. Victoria Nalongo listened well to her father's advice and developed a love of reading and did her best in school.

After Victoria completed her education, her love for reading led her to a job as a journalist. She became the first female sports journalist in Uganda, followed by a job reporting on politics in Uganda as both a parliamentary reporter and a presidential reporter. She worked as a reporter in a very difficult period of Uganda's political life and witnessed the Amin regime, the liberation war and the coming to power of the current President, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni.

Victoria started a third career when the Uganda president appointed her Resident District Commissioner for the Mpigi District, with a population of over one million citizens. Between 1991 and 1997, her role was to represent President Museveni in that strategic district and to supervise the implementation of government projects and programs, as well as mobilizing the masses for development (Victoria Nalongo email 2/14/13). She then became the Head of Administration and Logistics for the President of Uganda's Office (1997-2003). It was during this time that she traveled to northern Uganda to visit the conflict areas ravaged by the Lord's Resistance Army and worked on peace building, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Victoria Nalongo has on display in her home her New Vision 2008 Award Certificate. In 2008 she was awarded the Woman Achiever of the Year award for her community work with the vulnerable children and youth of Uganda. In addition to her accomplishments, she had been highly recommended for a Ford Foundation Fellowship in a letter to Parliament by Manuel Pinto, who at that time was working in government. She was awarded the Fellowship in 2006. She attended classes and training for community leaders at Columbia University in New York and American University in Washington D.C.

The Development of Bright Kids Uganda

Sunrise Children's Village

How did Victoria Nalongo, a poor fisherman's daughter, and Manuel Pinto, a major Parliamentary figure, make a difference in the individual lives of Ugandan children who are the most vulnerable and fragile? During Victoria's interview with Pauline Greenlick, in July 2012 and

in e-mails with Leonard Lies, Victoria talked about how she became involved in Scouting in 1988. She was elected Chief Commissioner for Scouts and her responsibilities included being in charge of the entire scouting activities in Uganda under the National Scout Council. As Chief Commissioner of Scouts, she went district by district throughout Uganda to see the challenges of Scouts in the district; then she would determine what funding the Districts needed. It was quite unusual for a woman to be in the Scouts, especially in Uganda.

After attending an international Scout convention in Geneva, Switzerland in 1999, Victoria returned to Uganda with a mission to recruit children who lived in the streets, as these children would otherwise have no opportunity to experience and learn about the many vocational and life skills offered through scouting. This desire to reach out to young people, living in the streets, ultimately led to an epiphany that transformed Victoria's entire perspective from that of a mother and respected professional to become the caretaker and mother of some of Uganda's most desperately needy children. Through scouting, Victoria Nalongo and Manuel Pinto's lives intersected, and an idea to help these disadvantaged children was born.

Victoria, during her interviews, has often referred back to the time of when she started working with the street children and how scouting was her means to reach these vulnerable children. It all began on April 7, 2000, when Victoria Nalongo found and, over a period of time, encouraged ten young street girls along with their three babies to leave the streets of Uganda. She made arrangements for the Uganda Scouts Association to pick-up and shelter these 13 street children so they could leave the hard life on the streets of Kampala. The young girls were brought to the children's home, which at that time was named *Sunrise Children's Village*, and was located in a rural area between Kampala and Entebbe. Victoria Nalongo provided them clothing, shelter, food and a safe place for these otherwise disadvantaged children to live and feel loved. Two babies went back to the streets less than a month later with their mothers.

Though two girls were sent away because of behavior problems eight girls remained and Victoria, remembering her father's words, focused on providing an education for these children, in addition to providing them with their basic needs. Educating vulnerable children has been her main mission, and the number of children that Victoria helped rescue rapidly increased. In addition to the street children she saved, Victoria Nalongo sought out and rescued many children from the northern part of Uganda who were severely affected by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) conflict. She would travel to the north regularly and visit the Internally Displaced Persons Camps (IDPCs), where children and civil war survivors took refuge from the LRA rebels.

Victoria Nalongo witnessed firsthand the atrocities of war and the fragility of the lives of the many children who were caught up in it. Many somehow survived (though many did not) without clothing, shelter and food. Moreover, many saw, with their own eyes, their parents brutally killed or just simply disappeared. Many of these children were forced to become child soldiers or "brides" for the rebels. Victoria Nalongo's own life, at times, was in danger. In one instance, she narrowly escaped army bullets to rescue former child soldiers and children whose parents were killed in the conflict.

The children she saved increased tenfold. The rescued children came from northern Uganda, the city streets, and soon included children who were abandoned or orphaned when parents died from AIDS and those who could not be cared for by parents who were simply too poor. The home she was providing for these children was soon named "Sunrise Children's Village."

After eight years (2008), Sunrise Children's Village was renamed Bright Kids Uganda because, according to Manuel Pinto, the "sun had already risen" for these children. As the years progressed, the number of children increased to 70 in 2013. The children come from all over Uganda. There were children who were abandoned and left for dead. Some parents would leave their children with Victoria Nalongo because they were too poor to support them, while other children were orphaned when their parent(s) died from HIV/AIDS.

For many of these children, Victoria Nalongo is the only "parent" they have known, and she provides them with the only home some of the children have ever had. Victoria's focus and mission has remained the same—those concerned with specially challenged children need to be aware of the relationship between education, human security (survival) and sustainable development.

Bright Kids Uganda Today

Bright Kids Uganda gives its children the services the government cannot and/or will not provide, despite the government's good intentions of developing and implementing laws and policies for the disabled and disadvantaged. As of September 2013, of the seventy children in Bright Kids Uganda, 14% were abandoned, 37% came from extreme poverty, 13% as a result of the LRA conflict, 49% had parents who have or had HIV/AIDS, 4% are diagnosed with HIV and 1% had, and is now cured, of TB. At least 75% of the children have a parent or parents who are deceased.

Each of the seventy children has their own unique need or disability, and all have come from poor, disadvantaged backgrounds. They are indeed the fragile, vulnerable and hidden children of Uganda. These are the children no one wanted or could not support, who could not be provided with even the least of services by the Uganda government. All of the Bright Kids children are disadvantaged; some have disabilities or are at extreme risk of developing disabilities. They now have been given love, support, housing, nutritious food, shelter, medical services, immunizations and, most importantly, an education.

Human Security, Projects and Sustainability

The vision of Bright Kids Uganda is to ensure all have a right to live, grow, to participate in the personal development of oneself through education and to participate in planning for their future (Bright Kids Uganda website). Bright Kids' focus is on human security (survival).

Bright Kids is in the initial stage of working towards becoming an economically sustainable environment by including in its portfolio projects such as the poultry project, piggery, goats, heifer, internet café, hair salon, and garden (Bright Kids Uganda website "Projects" and "Health Clinic," 2013). The projects fulfill a threefold purpose. First, the projects provide a food source for the children and staff, and the children's diets improve with the addition of eggs, meat, vegetable and fruits and milk. Second, the projects provide an income generated from the sale of the poultry (broilers and eggs) and goats, surplus milk, and hair salon products and services. Profits from the sales go right back into the projects to keep the projects sustainable and viable. Third, the children and staff learn valuable skills, such as how to care for the animals and how to budget a project and market items to the public.

Sustainability is a key ingredient in the fundraising schemes in the US to support Bright Kids. Bright Kids Enterprises was started in 2011 and has grown every year. Used books, textbooks, Audio books, African crafts and jewelry, and used miscellaneous items have been for sale through E-Bay and Half-Books.com. In 2013, funds over \$1000 have been generated to help support the immediate needs of Bright Kids.

However some projects like the education, dormitory and kitchen projects do not lend themselves to sustainability. Education in Uganda is very expensive; even the "free" education that the government offers for primary level students comes with hidden costs. At all schools children need to bring their own school supplies and buy their own uniforms. In addition, the "free" primary education has its drawbacks. The education quality is quite poor compared to boarding schools. Also, if the children attend the local free schools, they have to walk long distances and are forced to walk in the dark. This puts them, especially young girls, in a vulnerable position, as they could potentially face harm as they walk back and forth to school. The above reasons illustrate why Victoria Nalongo prefers that the Bright Kids children attend private boarding schools, despite the high school fees.

In addition to the high fees, the children are required to bring along with them enough clothes (uniforms), food, personal items such as toilet paper, sanitary napkins school supplies (paper, pencils, etc) for a three-month period. In addition there are transportation costs to transport many of the children attending schools located far away. The transportation vehicle must be large enough to accommodate them and all of their supplies. Bright Kids home relies on the generosity of outside sponsors from around the world to support the children's education. As of the fall of 2013, approximately 75% of the children are sponsored (Bright Kids Uganda website- children profiles).

Though they are not yet sustainable, the Bright Kids dormitory and dining hall both are projects that, once completed, will benefit the children. Currently, (2014) the children sleep in separate boys and girls dormitories which are sectioned off into three to four rooms. Inside the dorms are bunk beds, lined one against the other, hugging the walls. Scattered around the rooms are plastic bags containing the children's few clothes. One of the rooms in the dorms is reserved for bathing (water is fetched from the water source located outside), with latrines located a distance from the dorms. In each dorm there is a room for the "Aunties" who care,

feed, and watch over the children every day. During the year when some of the children are in boarding schools, there is enough room for the children to sleep. When the children return for holiday, however, the dorms are crowded and so cramped that the children sleep two to three to a bed, thus requiring the need for a larger dormitory. Plans have been developed, and as of spring of 2013, funds have been donated to begin the building of the dormitory, and ground has been broken. One large dormitory will be built with girls on one side and boys on the other. There will be areas for the children to store their clothing, and the Aunties will be able to regulate the coming and going of the children through one door in the center.

The dining hall project is another project that relies on donated funds. A three-sided small building houses the kitchen, where food is cooked in pots over an open fire. Mealtimes consist of the children eating food while sitting on their beds, as there is currently no dining room available. A new dining hall is being built, as well, which will provide the children with an area to sit and eat their meals and be provided with an area to relax, socialize and play games after meal times.

Seven Bright Kids Stories: Before and After

All of the Bright Kids children, as well as those targeted by Silver Oonyu, are vulnerable. They are at extreme risk of developing disabilities or have developed disabilities, such as blindness, which could have been prevented. If it were not for the vision and hard work these three private individuals, Silver Oonyu, Manuel Pinto and Victoria Nalongo, have done and are doing to help these children, they would remain hidden from view and forgotten.

Profiled below are six children who are and/or were a part of the Bright Kids family. The children's stories and profiles have been taken from the Bright Kids Uganda website, Bright Kids Uganda photo files, a New Vision newspaper interview from July 2008 and also from interviews with Victoria Nalongo and Pauline Greenlick in July 2012 and 2013.

Ronald Abong: Malnourished and Vision Impaired

Victoria Nalongo found Ronald Abong when she visited an Internally Displaced Peoples Camp in northern Uganda during the conflict with the Lord's Resistance Army (Swabb, 2012). In a New Vision newspaper article, Victoria Nalongo recalled how she found Ronald. In order to eat, she was told that he would scavenge in garbage dumps for food and slept naked in the cold for six months.

Ronald was rescued on July 31, 2003 from the Starch Factory Camp in Lira located in northern Uganda after his parents were shot dead by the LRA rebels. Victoria, along with Scout volunteers from the UK, found him at the Starch Factory's Internally Displaced Peoples Camp. Dr. Tim, a physician who was treating him said he was quite ill and only had weeks to live. He could not stand unaided and looked as if he were approximately three years old (Swabb, 2012). The doctor said that the boy was actually six and a half years old. He was severely malnourished, infected with worms and slowly dying (Swabb, 2012).

Feeling compassionate, Victoria took him to a local clinic for a medical evaluation. The doctor's advice to Victoria was to give him love, affection and a warm place to sleep. She brought him back to Bright Kids and nursed him back to health in three months. She noticed that he had cells around his head that had weakened and had shed onto his bed sheets. It took three months for his hair to grow back. While it was growing back, she noticed that the hair was quite sharp and thinking he was dying, she called the doctor. He informed her that that was the hair growing back and this was an indication that he would survive. He is now a healthy fifteen-year-old boy; he attends school, and only needs a special pair of glasses to help him see.

Esther: Child Soldier

Esther was kidnapped by the Lord's Resistance Army rebels and was forced to become a child soldier. She came to Bright Kids after being rescued from the rebels. In July 2008, Pauline Greenlick visited Bright Kids Uganda and was with Esther when she wrote a letter about what she did in the bush as a child soldier. She could not read nor write, so her responses were dictated to Pauline to transcribe.

When asked what her life was like before Bright Kids, Esther drew a picture of herself prone, in the bush, with a machine gun in her hands, shooting. Esther was part of a whole generation (more than twenty years) of children in northern Uganda who were not educated due to the fighting in the north. While at Bright Kids, her father was allowed to visit her but he was not allowed to take her to his home because of the fear that he would sell her back to the rebels. When asked what she liked to do now, Esther drew a picture of herself playing soccer.

Evelyn Akullu: Burn Victim

According to Bright Kids photo files and a New Vision article, dated February 24, 2004, and entitled "Horror in Barlonyo," the LRA rebels attacked the Cuk Adek village located in the north near Lira. They set fire to the area, killing children, adults and pregnant mothers. In February 2004, Evelyn was trapped in the Abia Internally Displaced People's Camp and was caught in the firestorm. She survived but was severely burned all over her face and body. Victoria rescued her and supported her through many surgeries. She survived and lived at Bright Kids for several years before returning to her family in the north.

Gloria Namusoke: Severely Disabled with Multiple Disabilities.

Gloria was found abandoned, along with her sister, at Katwe-Kinyoro in Kampala. She had mobility, speech, communication and cognitive disabilities. According to the New Vision article, dated July 2008, her parents were alcoholics and had dumped both girls near the railroad track. The two girls were rescued and taken to a children's home. Gloria's sister was perfectly developed and immediately was adopted, as she was considered a beautiful child.

No one wanted Gloria because she was severely disabled and those with such disabilities are simply discarded and ignored. Victoria was notified about Gloria and took her to

Bright Kids when Gloria was six-years-old. Eventually she legally adopted Gloria as her own child in 2005. Raising Gloria was a challenge as she needed constant care; she was not able to care for herself, even for the most basic needs such as toileting, eating, dressing and moving around.

Gloria could communicate by bending her head if she was sad and swing her legs if she was happy. Gloria began to show growth every year she was with Victoria. She would sing with her and laughed when Gloria would clap her hands in response. Nutritious food, a warm bed and medical care, which included surgeries to improve the functioning of her legs, all helped Gloria grow and learn new skills. Even Gloria's seizures were reduced to only a few each year. Her world was limited to the Bright Kids compound or in the nearby village. Victoria would push her in her wheelchair around the village, and the villagers would smile and greet them.

In 2012 an American sponsor was found, and for the first time in twelve years, Gloria could go to school. The boarding school was for children with special needs and located within easy driving distance from Bright Kids near Entebbe. After two weeks in the school, Victoria went to visit her, bringing Pampers and supplies. She was shocked when she found her to be covered in her own vomit and quite ill. She immediately took Gloria to the hospital and within a day, Gloria died.

There is a strong suspicion that she was being neglected at this school. Schools such as this are not well run, though this is all that is available for vulnerable children who are disabled. It was less a case of malice than of lack of skills and information. Her life was short; she was only twelve years old when she died. Though she had a short life her spirit lives on today at Bright Kids through the new Gloria Namusoke Health Clinic. This clinic was built with funding from Global Peace Exchange (University of Florida) on the Bright Kids compound in 2012 and provides health care to all of the Bright Kids. Naming the clinic after Gloria will not only keep her spirit alive, but it is also intended to provide free health care to the surrounding community members who are disabled. It also will hopefully encourage those with disabilities to come out into the open and seek help and support.

Harriet Sanyu and Donald Byamakama

In the spring of 2012, a dog bit a mother of six children who lived in the deep rural areas of Uganda. After several days, she became ill, and it was suspected that she was bitten by a rabid dog and that she needed immediate emergency care. Her husband gathered what meager funds he could find and accompanied his wife on the long journey to Entebbe. The hospital at Entebbe was the only hospital in Uganda that had the capacity to treat victims of rabies. Getting his wife to the hospital involved quick planning, though the journey was over six hours long. He had to hire a motorcycle called locally a Boda Boda to take them to the closest taxi stand about two hours away. Then he continued the long trek to Entebbe, and they both endured a grueling—and for his wife, extremely painful—four-hour taxi ride in a cramped and crowded, small “minivan” taxi.

The mother's smallest child, Donald, accompanied her, as he was only one month old and she was still breastfeeding him. After arriving at the hospital she began to "bark" like a dog which is an indication the rabies has become incurable and that she was near death. She died within hours, leaving her husband, one-month-old Donald, two-year-old Harriet and four older children still at home waiting for their mother to return. Her poor and distraught husband then sought funds to transport his wife back to the village, and had to undergo the long six-hour journey in reverse, though just with his son and his wife in a coffin for burial at home.

A journalist had heard about this sad story and made an appeal to Ugandans to help this family, especially for someone to care for the two youngest children. The journalist knew about Bright Kids and contacted Victoria, who agreed to take on the additional two children. The father once again made the long six-hour journey with his two youngest children, Donald and Harriet. They arrived tired and very hungry at Bright Kids in the late night. The father was so grateful to Victoria for caring for them.

The children were in need of warm clothes, baths and nutritious food. Donald's stomach was hard and bloated because he had been fed cold cow's milk during his second month of life (and not his mother's warm and nutritious breast milk). Harriet was tired and cried on and off throughout the day and night. Within days, Donald had shown signs of improvement as he was fed warm milk, though Harriet continued to cry and refused to be held or consoled.

Victoria could not understand and thought that either Harriet missed her family or possibly did not understand the language spoken at Bright Kids. Finally upon closer examination, it was found that Harriet had multiple chiggers imbedded in her skin, her feet, her hands and that they were infected. After the chiggers were finally removed, Harriet thrived and she and Donald are happy children today. Had it not been for Victoria's care, both of these children might not have survived, or if they did, would have developed disabilities due to their poor environment and lack of care.

The Faces of Aids

Easter Sunday 2013 should have been a day for joy, celebration and family gatherings. However the day became one of extreme sadness as three Bright Kids children learned that they lost their mother to AIDS. The family had placed the children at Bright Kids since they could not support the children with the mother who was suffering from the last stages of the disease. The father, though his children were living at Bright Kids, often visited the children.

One day back in August 2012, the father had taken the children, along with a University of Pittsburgh intern, for a visit to their mother in an Entebbe hospital. She died six months later. (Information for this profile was obtained from interviews with Victoria Nalongo, Maria Cruz and Simone Vecchio, University of Pittsburgh Bright Kids Uganda interns, 2012 and from the Bright Kids Uganda website "News" section). The children remain at Bright Kids Uganda home.

Unfortunately HIV/AIDS is rampant in Uganda, affecting millions. At Bright Kids there are a number of children infected with the HIV virus who are thankfully receiving medication to control it. Uganda's HIV/AIDS policy is progressive and HIV clinics are spread throughout the country, thanks to Manuel Pinto's countrywide efforts when he was the Director General of Uganda HIV/AIDS Commission in 1992-1994.

Pinto's nation-wide efforts spread information to Ugandan citizens about this horrible epidemic and the means to prevent it. Throughout Uganda, condoms are ever present in public places and bathrooms; AIDS billboards are along highways; HIV/AIDS clinics are easily accessible to citizens; and if infected with HIV, counseling is available.

Despite all of these efforts the HIV/AIDS rate remains high. At Bright Kids there have been several children who are HIV positive and those currently there are receiving the best care and medication possible. With proper care, all of the Bright Kids children, even those who are HIV positive, can expect to have a healthy future.

The Nansubuga and Hanifa Stories: Acid Attack Victims

Gender Violence is an increasing threat to vulnerable children. According to Victoria Nalongo, Uganda has no policy or homes for children who are left homeless from gender violence (Victoria Nalongo email Dec 5, 2012). The Uganda newspaper "New Vision" published an article on Dec 3, 2012 profiling one of the most horrific acid attacks to occur in Uganda.

Melissa Nansubuga was a mother of four children who had a difficult time feeding and supporting her children. Nansubuga had a hard life starting when she got pregnant while she was in Primary 7. The man responsible for getting her pregnant "promised to take care of her" so she could continue on with her schooling. His promises were short-lived, and soon she became pregnant again. By October 24 2012 she had four children and was struggling as a housewife and mother. Even though her children's father was a taxi driver and earned an income, she would wait in vain for money to buy food and to pay school fees for the children. The children were often sent home from school because of non-payment of funds, and they often went hungry.

Nansubuga's mother suggested that she work with her as a food vendor in order to provide money for the children. She ran the food business successfully and was able to bring in money to feed her family. The children's father complained about her working late hours and leaving early. One day, while returning home from work, the father, along with one of his friends, grabbed her and forced her to drink acid.

The suffering Nansubuga endured is indescribable. One side of her face completely melted away with multiple open wounds over her entire body. She could not afford the antibiotics, which were desperately needed to heal her wounds and burns. Despite the pain and watching with horror as her body parts rotted and melted away, Nansubuga desperately hung onto life. However, her desire to live was not enough; she died leaving four children

homeless and alone. Meanwhile the police had tracked the children's father down. He had acid burns on his hands and sought medical care. He was arrested for murder and is now in jail.

Their grandmother took in the four children, but she was too poor to feed and care for them. Appeals were made throughout Uganda for some home to take them in. After being contacted three times, Victoria Nalongo somehow found the funds to bring them to Bright Kids on Christmas Eve.

Even though, in the case of Nansubuga, the murderer was arrested and jailed, that is not always the case. According to the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey in 2011, about 56% of women, especially from the age of 15 have suffered physical violence. In some instances, the victims have died. Many victims of acid attack end up abandoning their legal claims at the police station because of the way they are handled. The victim may be too weak to even visit the police station. If the victim visits the police, she is often told to move from place to place and in the end told that there is not enough evidence to support her in court. The acid attack victim's families are often forced to pay for expensive treatment and drugs and therefore have no money left to pay the legal fees.

In Nansubuga's case, the acid attacker was jailed, though that might have been an exception to the rule. Another acid attack victim was not so lucky. The following story is about a second acid attack victim that appeared in the New Vision articles "How domestic violence affects innocent children" and "I endured a marriage so difficult it left me scarred" (both were written by Gladys Kalibbala).

Hanifa Nakiryowa came from a poor family but did manage to put herself through school up to university level. Nakiryowa had become involved with her university lecturer whom she met while at the university. They had moved in with each other and they had their first child. After the child was born, he threw her out of their home. He demanded she become a housewife and forbade her to have a career. After her family intervened, she obliged him by staying home for seven years taking care of their home and two children.

He accused her of unfaithfulness, and she proposed a separation. He refused and in Islam, if a man refuses the idea of separation, separation or divorce cannot be granted. Hanifa continued with her studies and obtained her Master's degree. She applied for a job at the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council and was hired. Her husband continued to accuse her of infidelity and threatened her life. She reported this to the police, but nothing was done.

While living with him she feared for her life and later relocated to her brother's home for safety. One evening, Hanifa went to pick up her two children from her estranged husband's home. Little did she know that that evening would change her life forever. It was dark, around 8:00 pm. As she waited for him to answer her knock on the door, a man approached her. As he passed her, the man opened a plastic bag and poured acid straight onto her face. Her husband never showed up or acknowledged her calls for help. Neighbors helped her to a hospital. Her husband came to the hospital the next day and denied hurting her. Her family accused him of

the incident, and the husband responded by accusing the family of threatening him! One of Hanifa's cousins reported the case, but nothing was done. Her husband was given police bond, and the file completely disappeared.

When Hanifa was released from the hospital, she pursued reopening the case. She followed the police files to several police stations where they were lost or buried. She eventually resorted to the media and radio stations, where she was given the opportunity to speak out on how her case was being handled. Thus, the case finally went to court. Her husband pleaded not guilty and was freed and continues to teach at Makerere University.

Hanifa is still pursuing justice. She is now starting a campaign for human rights. Her physical injuries are severe and painful, and her face is totally deformed and scarred, in addition to losing vision in one eye. With her injuries she is considered disabled and unable to work and support her two children. One of her children also received acid burns on the stomach area when the acid splashed on her. Victoria Nalongo has provided Hanifa Nakiryowa with support in pursuit of her goals of empowering women who are victims of gender violence. In 2013 Hanifa took a position at the Acid Survivors Foundation of Uganda (ASFU) and currently provides support to acid attack survivors.

Conclusion

Educational development in Uganda has evolved over one hundred years to what it is today. During that time, Uganda experienced a multitude of missionary schools of different denominations each established with missions duplicating administrative and teaching services.

Colonialism pushed Uganda toward the British system of education, which intensified conflicts among the mission schools, the Muslim community and other Uganda communities. Traditional and community leaders demanded school inspections, more governmental control, teacher training, ever-changing types and levels of schools and financial support from the government.

Discrimination against Africans and women and policies favoring minorities and men remained in place down to the eve of independence. Stringent exams, using the British system of "up or out" were in place, which narrowed the field of admissible students in the coveted higher education system (universities) to a small minority. As a result the majority of Ugandans were left without skills or employment opportunities.

Over thirty years of civil strife and political instability since Uganda's Independence in 1962 has created an educational nightmare. Generations of children, if they survived the conflict, were left without basic needs such as food, water, shelter and medical care. Tragically, this lost generation did not have any access to an education. As a result of the mayhem in the north and the east of Uganda, poverty and disease remained rampant, and poor malnutrition

caused children to be born disabled or to later develop disabilities. Blindness, which could be prevented with vaccinations and clean water, has afflicted over millions of Ugandans.

In response to this crisis, The Uganda government established a multitude of laws and policies giving those with disabilities back their human rights. Yet these laws are not being implemented to their full extent, and a majority of Ugandans with disabilities do not have access to society. While Uganda may have policies which appear logical and progressive with regard to children with disabilities, Uganda's "Hidden Children," they do not have the money or the capacity to implement them. The stigma and curse of being disabled still exists, and Ugandans with disabilities are still hidden in back rooms.

Despite the setbacks in implementing the laws and policies, there is hope in Uganda for those with disabilities. Community organizations, such as The National Union for Disabled Persons in Uganda (NUDIPU), are working with families who have disabled family members. NUDIPU and other organizations have been instrumental in pushing for more government involvement.

Individual Ugandans, as we have seen in this paper, through their dedication, vision and hard work, have had an important impact on the debate about disabilities by providing a model for how the most vulnerable and fragile population can have a chance for a future. While the numbers are small, the potential for civil society-based sustainable development opens up a range of possibilities for human security among Uganda's marginalized and disabled children.

Three individuals, Victoria Nalongo Namusisi, the late Manuel Pinto, and Silver Francis Oonyu, have been profiled here along with their successful work in helping the "Hidden Children" of Uganda. This paper suggests that they have given us a model to prevent many children from acquiring disabilities and for the provision of services and support to those who are disabled. Through these three individuals, though the number of them is small, children's lives been saved. Necessities such as food, shelter, clothing, education and medical care, a given we take for granted in the developed areas of the world, are now available. Through the example of these three individuals, an ever-expanding worldwide awareness program can be developed, and a future for those most vulnerable children can be made a reality.

Appendix

Bright Kids reaching out on a Regional and Global Level

Bright Kids Uganda USA Foundation has been on-going since 2008. It began when a small group of academics and interested supporters from the US visited Uganda and formed a board to support the Bright Kids Uganda Children's Home. The board has grown to ten members, and financial support, as of November 2013 is now over \$27,000 a year and growing. Board members are actively pursuing grants, projects, and fundraising opportunities, as well as visiting Bright Kids in Uganda on a yearly basis. Financial support is strongly focused on education, encouraging sustainable projects to continue and profit in Uganda and supporting human security.

The internship program is expanding. Additional universities and USA volunteer organizations as well as Medicalmissions.org are attracting volunteers, interns and physician inquiries. In addition, a Manuel Pinto Scholarship Fund has been organized and implemented to provide scholarship funds to Bright Kids students who have successfully completed secondary school and are planning on continuing education at university or higher education level.

Bright Kids Uganda USA continually provides updated information and awareness to our global supporters through our active website: www.brightkidsuganda.org as well as semiannual newsletters. Bright Kids Uganda will be premiering in 2014 a Bright Kids documentary film about Victoria Nalongo and her precious 70 children. Bright Kids Enterprises sells goods and crafts on the web and at retail outlets to raise money for Bright Kids projects in Uganda.

Beginning in 2008, the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School for Public and International Affairs, along with the Ford Institute for Human Security, and Florida State University's Global Peace Exchange have been instrumental in organizing and implementing a successful Bright Kids Uganda intern program. The internship program combines international travel, hands-on international development field experience, a safe, reliable NGO where English is spoken, low-cost on-site living quarters with meals, and the flexibility to plan your own project that meets individual interests.

The University of Pittsburgh interns receive practical experience in program planning and implementation, while having access to Uganda's diverse development and political communities (Ford Institute Speakers Series, 2012 "A Woman in a Man's World"). Interns spend approximately two to three months at Bright Kids Uganda while working on a specific project. Projects included interest in food security, with a focus on the poultry and piggery projects, micro-finance, assessing and building the health clinic, and projects related to human security and Bright Kids support.

Purposeful Penny is a University of Pittsburgh certified student organization that was organized in 2010. Mobilizing their members' personal networks and gatherings, Purposeful Penny has collected coins through small change collection spots throughout the university and the city of Pittsburgh. Throughout the year, they have organized fundraisers, selling Uganda

coffee at a University of Pittsburgh site and hosting international dinners for donation purposes. Purposeful Penny selected Bright Kids Uganda to donate its first year's collected money in 2010 and has continued its support for Bright Kids every year.

In addition to fundraising, three Purposeful Penny members traveled to Bright Kids in July 2013 as interns working on the clinic, poultry and micro-finance projects. For the past three years, Purposeful Penny has collected over \$7000.00 for Bright Kids Uganda.

Carlow University, a private university, is interested in working with Bright Kids Uganda and is in the planning stages of a proposed 2014 program in Uganda. Carlow University is a Catholic institution located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Founded by the Sisters of Mercy from Carlow, Ireland, Carlow University has grown from a small private women's institution to a co-ed university offering undergraduate and graduate programs in Nursing, Teaching, Management, Humanities, Sciences and Social Change.

Carlow University's core mission is to "embrace an ethic of service for a just and merciful world" (Mission Statement, 2013). It is through this mission and core values for reverence for diversity and its aspirational leadership for the betterment of all creation, service to the community that drives Carlow University to pursue work involving children with special needs and human trafficking in Uganda.

Carlow University professors, Dr. Susan O'Rourke, professor of special education and Dr. Mary Burke, professor of psychology, visited Uganda in July 2013. Their focus was in educational and service opportunities in Uganda for Carlow students for the year 2014. As a result of their visit, Carlow University is in the initial phase of developing four projects. The first project involves teacher training at the Entebbe Children's Welfare School, a special needs education public school linked to Bright Kids Uganda and located in Entebbe, Uganda in January and February 2014.

A comprehensive plan was developed for the second project to be located in the Teso region in Uganda. The plan involves parents and teachers of children who have special needs, including teacher training and professional development, retention of girls in schools, support for parents and families, involving the community through community gardens and collaborating with universities.

Civil strife has negatively impacted children. Bright Kids Uganda has over seventy children who are now in a safe environment with their basic needs being met. However, many have experienced post-traumatic stress. The third project area that Carlow University is focusing on is the children's mental health issues and how they can emotionally survive the trauma they have experienced. Because the civil war produced a vulnerable and fragile population often living in extreme poverty, especially for females, the fourth project involves domestic violence. Gender violence, especially acid attacks and human trafficking means an increase in the number of children being sold as sex slaves (O'Rourke, 2013).

In the fall of 2012, Dr. Alan Konyer, a Canadian physician, along with his daughter, Alicia, was interested in working for a few weeks as volunteers in Africa. Dr. Konyer was interested in providing medical services to a medical clinic in Africa, and Alicia wanted to fulfill her lifelong dream of working in Africa with children. He searched the Internet for health clinics and through the website medicalmissions.org, he found Bright Kids Uganda.

Within a few weeks, Dr. Konyer and Alicia planned two weeks in February 2013 to provide medical services at the Gloria Namusoke Health Clinic. Upon his arrival, Bright Kids Director, Victoria Nalongo Naumisis, welcomed Dr. Konyer and Alicia with open arms, as he was the first medical volunteer to serve at the newly established clinic.

Both Dr. Konyer and Alicia were immediately swept up into the daily challenges and success stories, which have since changed their lives forever. Dr. Konyer religiously kept a daily blog detailing children's stories, shopping for medical supplies, directly meeting emergencies and crises and immersing himself into the Uganda culture. His photo blog can be accessed on the Bright Kids Uganda website.

The desire to help Bright Kids continued after he returned home to Canada. In the fall of 2013, he organized, along with his family and friends, a successful fundraising party in his hometown Lindsay, Ontario. Over \$13,000 was raised in one evening, with \$10,000 going towards a much needed Bright Kids Uganda van. The remaining funds were put toward several children's educational sponsorships. Future plans include an additional fundraiser and future visits to Uganda with his daughter, university educators and medical service providers.

In 2012, a group of students from Florida State University's student organization, Global Peace Exchange, chose Bright Kids Uganda as the place to build a health clinic. The students donated over \$7000.00 US dollars within a few months and within a year the clinic was built. The clinic is called the Gloria Namusoke Health Clinic, after the Bright Kids child of the same name. The clinic provides free health care for all of the Bright Kids children, in addition to providing free health care to community members who are disabled. The future clinic plans include planning on offering medical services, for a small fee, to the local community, thus ensuring the clinic's sustainability. The clinic employs a fulltime qualified nurse, who is also qualified in midwifery practices. In addition to providing medical care when the children become ill, the clinic provides immunizations and visual and hearing screenings for Bright Kids and the surrounding community. The clinic has been posted on the Medical Missions website, medicalmissions.org with over 30 postings including family medicine, speech, dermatology and more. This site is attracting interest among medical professionals to spend time at the clinic and provide specialized services to benefit the health and well-being of the children and surrounding community.

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I would also like to thank the Pinto family for inviting me into their lives and sharing with me the wonderful work Manuel Pinto had done to help Ugandans to help themselves. And last many thanks to my loving husband, Louis Picard, who took me to Uganda in 2008 to meet his wonderful friends and colleagues, visit all of the places he lived, talked into the night about Ugandan politics, history, internal conflicts and patiently explained the Ugandan complex history again and again to me. He also co-authored this paper and wrote about the interesting, colorful and, at times, devastating history of Uganda. I am thankful for his excellent research editing which has made this paper what it is today.

Pauline Greenlick
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She has been active in regular and special education for over 35 years and her teaching experience has spanned teaching students in preschool through high school. Teaching responsibilities included teaching students in regular education and students with learning, cognitive and autistic disabilities. During her ten years in the Montgomery County Public School System (MCPS) Maryland, she was actively involved in coordinating, teaching and implementing inclusive education practices in the Montgomery County Public School system. In addition she also coordinated the gifted and talented program for students with disabilities at Northwood High School which was one of the three MCPS high schools in the county that provided this specialized program.

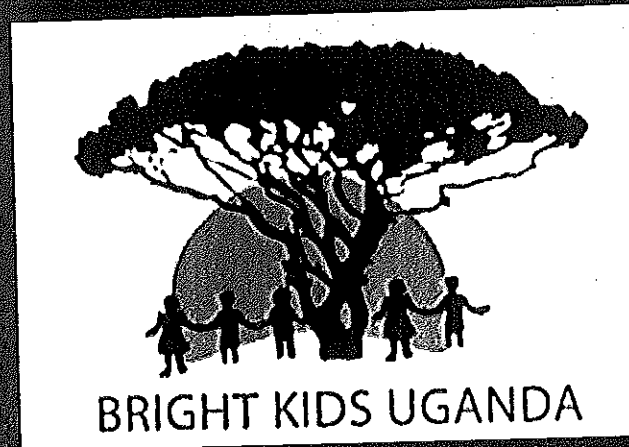
International experiences include Central and South America, Europe and over fifteen African countries. She has presented topics including special education issues in Uganda, South Africa and the US and at conferences in Vienna, Austria, Tobago, Trinidad and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. International work has included providing educational information and support for teachers and administrators in South African and Ugandan schools and non-profit organizations about good teaching practices and special education issues.

Louis A. Picard is the Director of the Ford Institute for Human Security and Professor of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh. He is also the former Associate Dean (1988-1992) and Acting Dean (1989-1990) of the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh and served as Director of the International Development Division of the Graduate school of Public and International Affairs of the University of Pittsburgh. He served as President of Public Administration Service. (2002-2005). His research and consulting specializations include international development, governance, development management, local government, civil society and human resource development. His primary area of interest is Africa and he has had extensive fieldwork in Southern Africa including three years in South Africa. He has worked in the Anglophone East and West Africa, including the Horn, Francophone West Africa and North Africa. He also has research interests and experience in Central America and the Caribbean, South Asia and in Central and Eastern Europe and Russia.

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