



August 2017

The Teen Mothers Kampala Project

Hello, my name is Amy Heymann. I am the coordinator of MOPS in Heidelberg, Germany. MOPS is Mothers of Preschoolers, an international Christian organization with more than 33,000 members. I have been actively supporting our sister group in Kampala Uganda since January 2017. This is a group of 20 teen mothers between 15 and 25 years old and the coordinator is Sylvia Nantango. The mothers in the group are extremely poor. Most are uneducated, many cannot read or write, and it is very hard to break out of that since even basic education is not free in Uganda. These mothers make on average 1 dollar a day selling soda or corn on the street for 10 hours a day. It is a very hard life which offers no hope for them or their children.

Our women live in shacks that have no running water or electricity. They cook on open wood fires in their huts which can be quite dangerous. We have already had to pay the hospital fees for a mother and a small child burnt severely by hot water. We have also provided the hospital fees for one C-section for a baby that was breech and a midwife for a 15-year-old girl. The poor have no medical insurance and no means to pay a doctor. They would die untreated without the money to pay for their treatment.



In Jan 2017 Sylvia and I began to think how we can empower these women to break the cycle of poverty and hopelessness. A first key element is that we want to provide vocational training for these 20 women. In May, we began to send 5 women to a tailoring school. We paid the school fees and provided a small amount of money to pay their housing and food since they now had no longer time to work 10 hours a day for food. The school was quite good but the teacher then took on 20 new students so that in the end there were 25 students on 5 sewing machines. The MOPS leadership team decided we should hire our own teacher and set up a workshop in their local church. Currently, we are renovating a large room in a very poor catholic church. They have offered the room for no fees. Now, we want to buy 5 sewing machines and pay for a teacher.



Sewing school

A second key element to help these women is to teach them to partly grow their own food. At the church, we have also been given the space to build 20 raised garden beds. Each of these large garden sacks can hold 100 plants. So, in total, we will have 2000 plants to feed many people.

We also provide a monthly feast for the group. Since we cannot afford to pay the school fees for all 20 of the women, we felt they needed some sort of treat as they wait for their school. This feast is cooked by the 5 women we sponsor for tailoring school. Most of our women can only afford one meal a day for themselves and their children. Therefore, a feast with plenty of food is a very special treat. These women live in a culture of scarcity and people generally do not share since everyone barely has what they need to survive themselves. At one of these feasts, the women were inspired by a verse from the Bible that says "when you give a dinner, invite the poor who cannot invite you back". So they invited some poor children from the neighborhood to share their feast.



The monthly feast

Another problem in Uganda is that about 30% of girls drop out of school by the time they are 14 years old. They drop out because they have no money to pay for sanitary pads when they have their period. Our MOPS women have decided to adopt a grade school with 300 girls in rural Uganda and make cloth sanitary pads to give to these school girls. It is very helpful for the school girls, gives our group an important sewing project and makes them excited that they in turn can help others.

What are the plans for the near future?

We started small but realize that we must professionalize the flow of money and donations. So far we have been raising money via PayPal and GoFundMe. 100 % of what we receive goes to the MOPS group in Kampala, Uganda. I am sending the money by Western Union and keep records of what is given and what is spent and keep all the receipts. My husband and I have also covered many of the costs. In the meantime, Sylvia is applying to set up a non-profit organization and eventually we would like donations to go directly to that organization. But right now, we feel like we are a necessary bridge to get this process started.

At this point, 5 women are going to tailoring school. The others are waiting for their turn. Some of them want to learn to be hairdressers, some want to learn to cook, others want to learn about agriculture. These are simple trades, but the best they can hope for with no ability to read and write.

The costs are modest but they add up. Each trade school costs about 500 dollars a year per student. We also give the women 2 dollars a day to pay their living expenses for themselves and their children while they go to school. It cost only 100 dollars a month to pay for a private sewing teacher. Each sewing machine costs 300 dollars. The renovation of the work room in the church will cost 600 dollars. The garden setup will cost 300 dollars. We also hope to come up with an emergency medical fund. So far we have spent 350 dollars for a C- section, 250 dollars for severe burns and 100 dollars for a midwife for a 15 year old.

If you want to participate in this project you can do so via the links below. If you would like more information, you can email me at ja.heymannt-online.de.

Thank you,
Amy Heymann

Our blog is <https://teenmopsuganda.blogspot.de/>

Our pay pal is <https://www.paypal.me/ameliaheymannt>

Our go fund me is <https://www.gofundme.com/uganda-mosquito-repellent-soap>