



2

Dear Friends & Family,

My days are full, in Uganda. I hope yours are too. This week I visited a school for homeless youngsters called **Akanyijika** ('He has Remembered Me'). It's an Australian charity, but there are projects from many nations for AIDS orphans and abandoned children built among the hills around Kabale. They do so much good work. The food, clothing, care and education the children receive actually surpasses the average provision for children in the nation. But each child has suffered before they receive help; many don't receive any. And there are failures. Boys, in particular, if given a home after significant time on the streets, so often fail to adapt. They just don't stay -- the buzz of the streets and the peer group lure them away.

The story of **Dorakasi** (*Dorcas*, but not her real name) is hopeful. She is the one in the Chapel services whose voice rings out above all the rest. Her smile has an inner light. When I asked about her family, she hesitated and then said that her father had been a drunkard. It is hard to imagine alcohol abuse in and around a Christian university, but my Social Science colleagues assure me that it is a serious and increasing problem in Uganda.

Before Dorakasi was born, her father, returning from a binge, set fire to his family's hut. Three sisters, whom she would never know, died. A baby brother was gathered out of the ashes by a relative. Her mother fled to her parents, but her father demanded his wife's return. In later years, Dorakasi and two more sisters were born. Her father repented but could not change and abandoned his suffering family to take a new wife in a bid for respectability.

Yet there is no hint of bitterness in Dorakasi. She has accepted Christ, regained her life and visited her father to tell him *she has forgiven him*. She is free. She has completed her degree because a sponsor paid her tuition and she is moving into adulthood with a powerful testimony to the love of God.

May we be a beacon and conduit for God's love and help to others. **Lamentations 3: 22, 23**

Blessings,

Janet

Please pray --

- For me to find patience when water and lights fail and students lack enough basic education for new learning.
- For homes like Akanyijika for needy children, and sponsors for deserving young people like Dorakasi.

Reflections -- Youngsters leaving a good orphanage to return to the streets brought back to me memories of young people growing up homeless 'by choice' in South Africa. When I lived there, I understood that young people had been lured out of the drudgery and tedium of the farmlands to the glitz, buzz and commercialism of the cities. -- that charities or theft could provide and if they didn't then alcohol and drugs would dull their hunger; that their gang would be their family. Charities worked hard and swiftly to take them home, but 'home' was too often a single-parent, impoverished household, and the effort rarely succeeded.

There wasn't a lot of glitz on the streets of Kabale, but gangs of homeless children were there, as in The Cape. Young boys loitered on the unmade side-streets behind the main road, congregating at refuse heaps where something useful or tradable might be found.

Filth was never their concern. One young guy had fallen and cut his leg badly and it had become infected. That's what Will (not his real name) told me. Will was a young person himself, out of the UK, living at the College, as I was, doing voluntary work at a nearby medical centre before he would return to the UK to try *yet again* to get into med' school. Will had a *way* about him -- the ability to build a rapport with anyone. He spent time with the street kids and he realised that the lad with the injury was in urgent need of medical help.

I remember feeling quite distracted and, in the end, useless. My knowledge was of the *history of missions* when medical care for the poor of Uganda was free. Remnants of the missions survive but clinics now charged *a lot*. It was hard to see a way forward.

Will found it. He *found a way through the system*: The street lad was treated and recovered. He could walk without pain.

He would have lost his leg -- and his life.