

The Father's House

"Let the little children come to me...in my Father's house are many rooms." (Jesus)

The Vision for this Child-care project has several distinctive elements:

1. We are not building "orphanages." These are not institutions or glorified boarding schools.
2. We are not building "children's villages." Most of the children's villages in Uganda are fundamentally institutional in nature, even though the children may live in small family-like homes.
3. What we are doing is this:
 - a. Expanding the capacity of the local church to look after the orphans and vulnerable children in their community through mobilizing church members to embrace the children as if they were their own.
 - b. Creating enhanced, church-based "group foster homes" near the church, whereby the children enter into a foster-like family.
 - c. The children are not isolated from the community, but are active members of the community through the local church, the local school, and other local community and cultural activities and events. They have friends and playmates from neighbouring villages and families, as well as friends and playmates from within their church-based "foster home."

Remember this scenario: One child arrives at the local church and tells the Pastor he has lost his parents. His relatives can't look after him. He doesn't have a place to sleep, and he's hungry. The Pastor invites him in. Shows him where to bathe. Feeds him supper with the family, and then gives him a mattress to sleep on in the church. Then a second child comes with the same story. And, a third child; and a fourth child...until there are more children than he can look after. What does he do?

He calls together the leading women of the church, the mothers, and the men of the church, the fathers, and the youth leaders, as well as the church elders. They sit together and he shares his experience. He then asks these leaders, "What can we do? We know God's heart for these children, and that they are all over in our community and now here." He continues, "If we could expand the local church and all band together, then we would have room to accommodate more children."

The women in the church speak up and say, "We can find some single mothers or widows who could help look after the children." The men say, "We can find some men who will spend time with the children and lead them in Bible study and discipleship lessons, and will tutor them if they are having trouble in a subject at school." The youth leaders say, "We can play football with them and help cultivate a garden so there is enough food for them to eat." The business leaders in the church say, "We can look into creating some income generating projects that can help with school uniforms, medical needs, soap, etc."

With some help to get started, the people of the local church bind together to put what each can do together into a whole to care for the lost children around them. Humble. Simple. Modest. The church decides to take ownership of this solemn obligation to children; that it will be a ministry unto the Lord, to country, to community; that they will reject the degrading notion that orphan care should be a business using children to raise money on the backs of children. The local church rises up to meet a great challenge.