



**Spirit
In
Action**

Micro Grants
Major Change

Fall & Winter Newsletter 2024

Spirit in Action

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Tanya's Sabbatical Reflections

Hands-on agricultural learning

One of the goals for my three-month sabbatical was to learn about farming by DO-ing rather than reading or listening. I've come to know so many farmers through Spirit in Action, and while I took courses on sustainable agriculture in college, I've never worked on a farm or even done extensive gardening.

Earlier this season, I spent a week on Teri Farm in Kenya, where SIA Partners Samuel and Rhoda Teimuge live. I planted sweet potatoes, helped tend the orange trees, and planted vetiver to stop erosion. To prepare for the work, I trained with a physical trainer to get in shape; working outside in the sun all day is so different from my normal computer work! After the experience, I have even more respect for the elderly people I've seen tending farms in Uganda and Kenya.

Closer to home, I also spent ten days working on a farm in Ontario. I helped with the beekeeping process, including monitoring hives and harvesting honey! I also spent time in the apple and pear orchard, protecting against pests and picking fruit. Next time I visit beehives or orchards in Africa, I'll be able to speak and ask questions from my firsthand knowledge.

Both farms use organic methods, which prioritize the health of the soil, the area surrounding the field, and the workers as much as the crops themselves. Seeing the use of helpful insects and natural manures was inspiring, and I came to appreciate the great value of grants to SIA Partners who teach sustainable agriculture—using a blend of new techniques and traditional methods—and mentor new generations of farmers.



I never realized how many gym exercises directly relate to farming tasks, like swinging a hoe, pushing a wheelbarrow, and squatting to plant seeds.

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Then...And Now...

Seeing growth in Kenya and Uganda



Teri Farm Pixies (Kenya)

"Praise God, the pixie oranges have come back to life." In Feb 2024, Samuel Teimuge's orange grove was attacked by pests, and he had to prune all his trees back to the main branch (Left). After applying organic pesticides and removing pest host plants, the trees are back, and the branches are full of healthy leaves! (Right).



KADI Pineapples (Uganda)

New pineapple plants take 18 months to grow a single fruit. In 2022, Tanya & Kathleen saw the baby pineapples in KADI's field (Left). This month, KADI brought their pineapples to market in Kampala (Right). "Despite facing both advantages and challenges, the most important thing is—we made it happen!" says Musa Semakula



See a list of our 2024 grants and partners: www.spiritinaction.org/current-grant-partners

One with God's All-Ness

by Del Anderson, September 2004

I don't need to make things happen. My part is to let go of my fix-it efforts and focus my attention on God. Let the All-presence, All-power, All-wisdom, All goodness, and All-love of God flow in me and through me. Thus, we are co-creators with the Infinite One. I am a part of God, and as I trust God and trust the life process and identify with Spirit, I express the wholeness of God.

My part is to become God's peacemaker. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons and daughters of God."

Be; do less; rest and listen more. Flowers don't toil. Limbs attached to fruit trees don't struggle. The fruit comes forth. Our part is to let go and let God's grace, energy flow.

Terrorism and separation are from fear; from ever-straining, doing, doing, without letting go and uniting with the Father/Mother God. In Christ, fear is released, and the heart/soul is freed of pressure.

"Our souls are restless until they find their home in God." (St. Augustine)

Changing the Story For Young Women in Uganda

Grant Partner Spotlight: Adolescent Psychosocial Support & Resource Center

Empowerment is not just a buzzword; it's a **transformative process** that can manifest in many forms, affecting individuals, communities, and society at large. Elizabeth Stanley, SIA Admin talked to Juliana Nyombi, Founder of the Adolescent Psychosocial Support and Resource Center (APSARC) located in Uganda, to hear more about their approach.

Juliana started APSARC two years ago, hoping to change the story for the young women in the Nakasongola District, which is about sixty miles north of the capital city of Kampala. The area has seen increasing numbers of teenage pregnancies, risky illicit abortions, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, alcohol and substance misuse, and gender-based violence.

APSARC offers training on sexual health and reproductive rights, basic sustainable farming skills, and livelihood skills like hair-dressing and beading. Additionally, APSARC **offers psychosocial support through peer counseling**. These sessions enhance trauma healing and build resilience for the women in addressing various individual, family, and community issues. Juliana believes this support



The APSARC drop-in-centre serves young women, ages 15-25, who are adolescent mothers, survivors of intimate partner violence, or ex-prisoners. The centre gives them a place to be safe and make supportive connections.

helps the trauma survivors move to the next step on their healing journey.

Through these efforts, many of the young women have **gone from shying away to standing straight and looking people in the eye**. This newfound inner strength is the foundation on which they can transform their lives. For survivors of gender-based violence, tending gardens and keeping animals at home helps them feel more peaceful and **promotes a sense of hopefulness**, worthiness, and achievement.

Perhaps the most valuable lesson these young women learn from APSARC is "I Matter." For many, this is the first time they are respected, loved, and encouraged—the first time they are recognized as important, able, and worthy. **The journey to empowerment often starts when someone says, "I see you."** This is how old stories end and new ones begin. Thank you, APSARC, for instilling hope and empowering women in your community!

By the numbers

43 Out-of-school adolescent girls & young women accessed APSARC services Jan-April.

58% of the students are mothers who attend the workshops with their babies.

\$165 Saved in the group's collective savings. Each young woman is encouraged to save a minimum of UGX 3,600 (an equivalent of \$1) each week. This will contribute to start-up capital for their business ventures when they graduate.

Read more Grant Partner updates on our blog! <http://spiritinaction.org/news>

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SIA Partners in Action

Grants in Action



1. Cabbage harvest (Uganda). Young women at the CAP-AIDS Home of Hope grow their own vegetables and learn about gardening. The Home of Hope gives them a safe place to live and learn after leaving homes of violence.



2. Beekeeping in Burundi. The Giheta Rural Training Center has held two training sessions for beekeepers to upgrade their techniques. The Center's workshops help beekeepers modernize their hives with wooden frames, which allows for harvesting honey without destroying the hive.



3. School Supplies. Flaming Chalice International recently handed out school kits to more than 44 students in Ryansoro, Burundi. These students are among the top ten in their class but come from families that lack funds to support their children's education.



4. "Let's help each other." CESAPH is helping people with disabilities in Burundi to form savings and credit groups. CESAPH reports that the groups are doing well and working together to generate savings and increase their loan fund.



"The community is also starting to change the mentality it had towards people with disabilities," says Cedrick Bigirindavyi

5. Household assets. APDEI (Burundi) donated three rabbits each to ten vulnerable households in their rural Province of Mwaro. These rabbits can be raised for household income. APDEI also gave their guests a tour of the vegetable fields, introducing new crops like beetroot and carrot.



6. Let's go to the movies! Part of being a community hub is inviting kids to activities. In August, Ubuntu Community-Based Organization in Kenya turned their library into a cinema and invited kids to watch a fun movie. What a great way to build community, give parents a break, and engage the children.

A Beacon of Hope

Legal aid for vulnerable Burundians

Written by Burundi Bridges of Justice
(BBJ) Director, Théoneste Manirambona

In the heart of bustling Bujumbura, a dedicated legal team supported by a SIA grant is a lifeline to those in desperate need. Among them were 23 women and 19 children, whose stories resonated with pain but **shone with resilience**. This is not just a story of hardship but also a testament to the power of compassionate legal aid.

Through meticulous preparation and strategic planning, the BBJ lawyers navigated complex legal waters on behalf of their clients. They understood that each individual was more than just a statistic; each person had a story waiting to be told, which deserved to be heard and validated. The lawyers gathered evidence, built cases, and stood firmly by their client's side in the offices of Judicial Police Officers and courtrooms where justice often seemed elusive. Their efforts paid off; of the 98 cases handled with tenacity and heart, **88 resulted in positive outcomes!**

One of the most striking cases is that of a young girl, Maya* (name changed), who witnessed her mother's struggle against a violent partner. The mother was arrested for defending herself against the deliberate assault and battery by her husband. With the encouragement of her lawyer, Maya found her voice in the silence imposed by fear. Together, they wrote a story that highlighted not only her mother's plight but also Maya's own experience as an innocent bystander caught in a storm of violence. When the hammer struck for justice for Maya's family, tears mingled with laughter - a cathartic release marking the end of one chapter and the hopeful beginning of another. In that moment, it became clear that legal aid is about more than representation; it's about restoring dignity and empowering people.

The journey didn't stop there. Follow-up support enabled vulnerable people to **continue to thrive beyond their initial victories**. BBJ held sessions to share legal advice and increase awareness of people's rights. The journey continues for many others still seeking help; may we remain vigilant allies in their quest for justice until every voice is heard and every life restored.

A call to action: This story is not only an account but also **an invitation to recognize our role in this complex web of humanity**. Whether by volunteering or amplifying voices through awareness campaigns, we all can help create safer spaces for those who need it most.

Reach Girls

SIA helps organizations expand their reach

Zoom workshops. We train them in **measuring success, telling their story, taking compelling photographs, and writing reports**. We also provide letters of recommendation when they apply to other organizations.

This year, Reach Girls' **grant-writing efforts were successful!** They received grants from Share-Net International and Amplify Change for their work with young women living with HIV/AIDS in Malawi, including translating health materials from English into Chichewa.

Reach Girls also increased their local profile by forming relationships with two other women-led organizations in the Salima area. Building local coalitions is a way grassroots organizations can increase their impact and bring lasting change to their community.

For many of our grant partners, Spirit in Action is the first international funder for their programs. In addition to providing funding for projects, we help grassroots groups improve their organizational development through



When I visited Reach Girls in July 2023, I gifted Tiba Zimba (Director) the Malawian internet router I had used on my trip.

e-CATS Trains in Alternatives to Violence

Conflict resolution skills in Mwihoko, Kenya

The Alternatives to Violence (AVP) workshops from Empowering Communities as Actors for Transformation (e-CATS) couldn't have come at a better time. While young Kenyans protested government taxes (see box below), 20 young people attended the Advanced AVP session sponsored by SIA. The AVP program helps with anger management, clear communication, forgiving ourselves and others, and conflict resolution skills.

In August, e-CATS held a Training of Trainers session, where participants learned and practiced facilitation skills, including designing agendas, fostering team cohesion, guiding exercises, and conducting evaluations. "As a trainee, I was equipped to understand that inside of me, I have a transforming power that can bring a change to our society and our community," said Josephine Gate Kerario (aka Jovial Josephine). "As a trainer, I am training young people to help them overcome conflicts so they can have a solution that will not result in further conflict."

Josephine explains that the **first step in transforming conflict is transforming ourselves** so we can more effectively reach out to others in need. Similarly, Richard Karera, who lost his sight three years ago, shared with me in April about how he first learned to manage his anger and then was able to apply AVP techniques to repair his relationship with his wife. Through sharing these skills, AVP workshops are increasing peace in homes, communities, and the nation.



Catalysts for Change | Mwihoko AVP Workshop

Women in the Mwihoko Community near Nairobi, Kenya share a laugh in the midst of learning about how to transform conflict with positive interactions. **Watch the 12-minute video** about the workshops here: <https://bit.ly/ecatsvideo>

In the News: Kenyan Youth Protest Government's Tax Bill

The Kenya Finance Bill protests, also known as the Gen Z protests, were a series of demonstrations against proposed tax increases in the Kenyan government's Finance Bill 2024. The protests, led mainly by younger Kenyans, were organized through social media platforms like X, TikTok, and Instagram.

The demonstrations started as peaceful protests until the police responded with violence on July 2, and there were calls for President William Ruto's resignation. Clashes with security forces resulted in at least 22 deaths and many injuries. The Kenyan Parliament amended the bill, and then Ruto rejected it after the storming of the Kenyan Parliament. Human rights groups rallied to protect the protesters and condone the use of violence by the police.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenya_Finance_Bill_protests



"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

HELEN KELLER



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We gratefully acknowledge those who have contributed to SIA from May 7 to September 11, 2024.

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A dance of welcome and gratitude with Kathleen King and the women of RIDEP (Kenya)

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Epilepsy Medical Camp in Kenya

Diagnosing, treating, and creating awareness

400 people attended Kiserem Epilepsy Foundation's Medical Camp in Muihoko, Kenya, in April. The event, sponsored by SIA, was designed to increase awareness of and test people for epilepsy and train community health promoters.

Epilepsy is a disease treatable with medication, yet it is misunderstood, and if it is left undiagnosed, it can lead to major health complications.

Medical camps are essential in Muihoko, where most families are living below the poverty line and are unable to see a doctor or a specialist for their ailments. "Many people never have a chance to see the neurologists because it usually costs \$40 an hour," says Fred



Paul Nyamita (standing) and Samson (sitting) demonstrated the EEG machine during my visit to Kiserem Epilepsy's center in April 2024.

Kiserem, founder of Kiserem Epilepsy, who also lives with epilepsy. "The medical camp allowed them to see the doctors about their symptoms for the first time."

Over the course of the day, doctors saw over 100 patients living with epilepsy. Dr. Cecilia is an EEG machine specialist and tested forty patients, discovering **five new cases of epilepsy and ten cases where patients had been misdiagnosed** and needed prescription corrections. The day also had

sessions for caregivers to recognize the early signs of a seizure.

Kiserem Epilepsy's next medical camp will be in November.



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FALL & WINTER 2024 NEWSLETTER

Tanya Cothran, Executive Director

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