

Meeting Point International

The greatest need of a human being
is the need of belonging



MEETING POINT INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL REPORT

UGANDA - 2014

The only thing that matters in life is to be born, and to allow oneself to be loved

THE MESSAGE

“The greatest need of a human being is the need of belonging, which gives stability and certainty in life. Meeting Point International has discovered that, if a human being answers to this need, he/she will be able to face all aspects of reality and truly embracing the others.

MPI creates simple environments where each person can find it easier to belong and to experience love.

The value of the person is only possible when paying attention to something greater. The support we give is an instrument to tell our clients that they have a value and that they are responsible for it. **MPI did not invent this method, but we found out through the engagement in everyday's life. Scientific studies have proved that this method of ours works: depriving a person of love and belonging causes physical and functional harm.**

Having all this in mind, my work in MPI is to create or, to say it better, try to create valuable structures where each person can develop and discover himself. MPI becomes a place where everyone can be himself free of psychological, power oriented and stigma pressure. The challenge is only to live a constant comparison with one's own humanity. The person who belongs to a greater love becomes protagonist of his/her life. He/she finally discovers a true identity, and develops a consciousness that unites him/her with the reality. The reality is no longer against happiness' expectation but it becomes an alley. The person becomes the lord of the reality not because he possesses it, but because he discovers a belonging to someone else. **By belonging to a design that is not yours, that is to say, belonging to somebody else who is your friend, you become free.”**

THE DIRECTOR: ROSE BUSINGYE'S PROFILE

Rose Busingye is the **founder and president of MPI**. Native of Kabale, Uganda, Rose Busingye moved to Kitgum in the north of the country as a teenager, which became a centre of guerrilla activity when rebellion broke out in 1986. In this period she experienced first-hand the horrors of war when so many wounded people died from lack of assistance. Many people escaped the war and tried luck in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. After having seen all the people's sufferings, Rose matured the decision to live in Kampala and she took nursing at Nsambya Hospital. She graduated as a nurse and midwife in 1990.

From July 1990 to September 1992 she obtained a **Scholarship to the Hospital of Varese, north of Milan, Italy, where she specialised in infectious diseases, heart surgery and maternity care.**

On return to Uganda in 1992 she began working with HIV/AIDS patients and became skilled at counselling terminally ill people with HIV/AIDS. In June 2003 she founded Meeting Point International members.



THE STAFF

In 2014 Meeting Point International is having a total of 35 people working in the organization. The following is the list of staff according to their work posts:

9 social workers;
 1 project officer (Score);
 1 junior Program officer (Score);
 1 Chief Accountant;
 3 watchmen;
 1 guard;
 1 cleaner;
 2 nurses;
 2 accountants;
 2 adult literacy teachers;
 7 primary school teachers;
 1 head teacher;
 1 medical doctor;
 1 clean W.H.;
 1 caretaker;
 1 director of Meeting Point International

PEOPLE WE HELP

Meeting Point International helps more than **2,000 women, 200 children and 1,700 students:**
1051 HIV/AIDS clients out of which 251 on anti-retroviral drugs (**192** women, **40** men, **19** children);
1435 orphans on scholarship;
216 children in day care;
116 children in day care waiting for primary scholarship;
252 adult literacy learners in Kireka and Naguru slums;
135 elderly and poor supported;
38 orphans living in the Welcoming House

MISSION AND VALUES

Our mission is to **offer friendship**, in which people are **not reduced** to their problems or sickness but instead are **looked at and embraced for their infinite dignity**. Meeting Point International, in adherence to the **social teachings of the Catholic Church**, aims at supporting the most disadvantaged persons and communities of Uganda in their struggle for better life and development having as priorities the following objectives:

- assistance to the suffering victims of HIV/AIDS,
- commitment in poverty alleviation,
- Promotion of education at all levels.

OUR METHOD

Depriving a person of love and belonging causes physical and functional harm.

Having this in mind, work in MPI is to create or try to create original structures of the values and meaning where each one can develop and discover himself. MPI becomes a place where each can be himself, where an individual can express himself freely and live a constant comparison with his own humanity. The person who belongs becomes protagonist because he receives a face, and receives a consciousness that unites him with the reality;

he becomes the lord of the reality not because he possesses it himself, but because he discovers the belonging to someone else. **The belonging is to accept a design that is not yours, that is to say belonging to somebody else, who loves you. In this path you become free.**

OUR PROJECTS

Projects

Distant Support: The distant support is a project which aims to offer education to orphan and vulnerable children. The school fees and other school requirements are donated by sponsor/families/friends that live in a different part of the world (e.g. Italy, Germany etc). The sponsor is matched to a particular needy child and in the course of the year they exchange news about their respective lives. The sponsor is also updated about the school performance of the child and key information about his development.

The children under support are assigned to a specific social worker in loco who has the task to build and keep the relationship with the child and his caretakers. Moreover, the social worker facilitates and coordinates the flowing of information between child and sponsor;

SCORE: The acronym means Sustainable Comprehensive Responses (SCORE) for Vulnerable Children and their families. It is a five-year, USAID – funded project implemented by a consortium of agencies: AVSI (lead agency), CARE, TIPO and FHI360. In Uganda the project is implemented in 35 districts, 5 regions and aims to reach 25,000 households over the period of implementation. The goal of SCORE project is to decrease the vulnerability of critically vulnerable children (VC) and their households.

SCORE aims to meet this goal by achieving the following objectives:

- To improve socio-economic status of VC households;
- To improve the food security and nutrition status of VC and their household members;
- To increase availability of Protection and Legal Services for VC and their households members;
- To increase capacity of vulnerable women and children and their households to access, acquire or provide critical services.

MPI has 485 house holds benefiting from SCORE project; in total the beneficiaries are 3200 people composed of men, women and children. There is a range of activities which are proposed to the household according to a prior vulnerability assessment.



SCORE activities are: VSLA (Village Savings and Loan Association), Community dialogues, interactive learning sessions, psychosocial support, financial literacy, apprenticeship, urban horticulture, nutrition education to mention but a few.

ACTIVITIES

Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA)

The name VSLA refers to a specific group of people who save a certain amount of money and take small loans from those savings. The purpose of a VSLA is to provide simple savings and loan facilities in a community that does not have easy access to formal financial services.

The activities of the VSLA group run in cycles of one year, after which the accumulated savings and the loan profits are distributed back to members.

Meeting Point International counts 15 VSLA groups distributed in the shantytowns of Naguru and Kireka. The staff of Meeting Point International helps monitors the groups and gives technical support where is needed.

In 2014 the 15 groups saved and shared out 243,000,000/= shillings among themselves; with this profit, many members have started an income generating activity to increase their house hold incomes.

Nutrition and horticulture:

Meeting Point International implemented a number of activities focused on nutrition, such as nutrition trainings, cooking demonstration, household practice assessment, and medical check ups.

According to our tracking tools, we have registered 850 participants at the following training sessions:

- Nutrition dialogues on how to feed infants;
- Nutrition dialogue on balance diet;
- Nutrition dialogue on growth and development;
- Nutrition care of sick and severely malnourished children;
- Dialogue on the importance of food storage and hygiene;
- Nutrition dialogue on changing diet;
- Urban horticulture;
- Relation between nutrition, health and productivity.

Thanks to our follow ups and household and practice assessments, Meeting Point International was able to monitor different parameters such as general hygiene of the home, diversification of crops, safety of the water source, toilet facilities and hand washing, how is food prepared, how appropriate is the fuel for cooking, ways of handling the wet utensils and rubbish, how is the general nutritional condition of the household members, and how is food storage handled and how is malnutrition handled.



More than 80% of our families, whose households participated in the nutrition training, are now much better off than before. Many of our clients have learned how to ensure a healthy meal for their children and they also consider hygiene as one of the most important elements in the house.



Bark cloth:

Bark cloth' production is an ancient craft performed by the Baganda people who live in the Buganda Kingdom in south Uganda. For over 600 years, craftsman have been manufacturing bark cloth for the Baganda royal family and the rest of the community.

The inner bark of the Mutuba tree (*ficus natalensis*) is harvested during the wet season and then, in a long and strenuous process, beaten with different types of wooden mallets to make its texture soft and fine and give it a terracotta color.

In 2014 Meeting Point International started a laboratory of bark cloth with three employed tailors, and three sowing machines. The bark scrolls are bought from the farmers and taken to the laboratory; then the bark is treated to obtain the final product, which varies according to the costumers' needs. Meeting Point International adhered to several events which took place in Ambrosoli International School and Rainbow International schools in Kampala. In these occasions Meeting Point International displayed its bark cloth items which have been successful.

Psychosocial activities

Football and netball competitions, music dance and drama and educational trips are the most enjoyable activities of Meeting Point International. Through these simple activities, women and youth have lots of fun and they express themselves without fear of been ridiculed.

The attention to every detail of the journey, the delicious food shared among the participants, the amazing landscapes, the atmosphere of solidarity and joy, and the dances overwhelming: these are all factors that lead to discover the beauty of the creation, and everyone feel part of this beauty. Meeting Point International implements also sport competitions which help our clients to be more alive and energetic; beside that, being part of a team helps the individual to become more confident in life and it reduces the risk of loneliness by being together with other friends.

Whenever our clients get the chance to kick a ball or singing and dancing, they feel free and they forget their problems for a while. By singing and dancing together our women and youth get the strengths to face daily toil.



Community Dialogues

Community dialogues are a way to say that without a true relationship a person cannot stand daily life.

Since Meeting Point International started its mission, Rose Busingye doesn't want to miss a single day except Friday (which is dedicated to general staff meeting at office headquarter), without meeting her clients.

Each meeting has a topic, but the more the relationship is intense, the wider is the theme of conversation.

The following is an example of discussion topics which are proposed during the community dialogues:

- Alcohol and drug use;
- Value of life and money;
- Sanitation and hygiene;
- Value of education;
- Parental care and birth registration;
- Factors affecting human development

Some of the themes are generated by the participants themselves as results of prevailing issues and challenges in their communities.

Meeting Point International has become known for its unique approach to HIV/AIDS which places a person's value as being of greater importance than any of his/her circumstances. We have found that acceptance of disease has become a key to our success.

Meeting Point International and Meeting Point Kitgum¹ have also involved in family reunion dialogue about the possibility of Acoli clients living in Kampala to return home after years of being away due to insurgency. After the encounter with friends and relatives in a dialogue there was a visible urge among the participants to return and settle in their homes of origin.

Support to Persons living with HIV/AIDS

Home visits, antiretroviral treatment and Medical Care are among the core activities of Meeting Point International.

When Rose Busingye started doing community outreaches, she was struggling to teach patients how to take drugs, to eat well and rest. Those were all good advises, and very true. But patients did not listen to her, they threw away the drugs, very many of them got worse and died.

Rose asked herself why all this ignorance and obtuseness in understanding that care and treatment are important. Why did clients refuse her support?

During this moment of crisis, Rose was most especially helped by the deep friendship with the Servant of God father Luigi Giussani, founder of the Catholic movement Communion and Liberation. Rose understood a very simple but fundamental thing: sick people did not need a list of rules to follow, but a presence capable to communicate the beauty of existence. Simply by living her vocation of Memores Domini (lay people who dedicate their life entirely to Christ, in poverty chastity and obedience), Rose became more attracting than what many other strategies or discourses could do.

Simply by visiting them, eating with them, singing with them, praying with them, sharing joys and sufferings with them, Rose became one of them, part of their life. With time, many sick women infected and affected by HIV/AIDS joined Meeting Point International. Despite daily life's toil, women cannot miss a single meeting with Rose, which is schedule twice a week for each group of women (Naguru slum and Acoli quarter in Kireka slum).



Home and school visits

Home and school visits are critical to the work of a social worker. When a client receives a visit from a social worker, he/she feels very happy, the relationship becomes more interesting. It is only by visiting the client in his own environment that a social worker becomes more aware of the life condition of the client, his needs, his desires; slowly by slowly, between the two is established a relationship of trust and friendship.

Welcoming house

Welcoming house is a home where children from different tribes and backgrounds are welcomed to live the experience of a family.

¹ Meeting Point Kitgum was born in the 80's from the friendship between Ketty Opoka and her Italian friends, whom shared the experience of the war and the victims of HIV/AIDS.

Most of these children have a very painful past; nevertheless, the love and the care of Rose Busingye, aunt Apophia, and other caretakers is very strong and children feel that they are at home. Some of them are in nursery school, others in primary, others in secondary school, the grown ups are working or studying at the university. They all have a deep sense of belonging to each other and to who is taking care of them everyday: they consider each other as brothers and sisters, a big family which never let you down.

OUR HOME TERRITORY

The area of work of Meeting point International is Kampala district the capital city of Uganda, specifically in Nakawa division in the parishes of Naguru, Luzira, and Banda at Acholi quarters; and also parts of other divisions of Kampala and boardering district of Wakiso to the east. These communities are composed ethnically of the Acholi, Langi, Ateso, Madi and Kumam. These people are mainly from Northern and Eastern regions of Uganda particularly, Gulu, Pader, Kitgum, Apac, Lira, Adjumani, katakwi Kumi and Soroti, this was as a result of insurgency, that led to internal displacement of communities from their home regions. Meeting Point International welcomes every body regardless of colour and race, because of this openness there has been an increase in the number of members from as far as Congo, Sudan, Rwanda etc. These communities is faced with challenges that range from trauma from unstable areas, the people have become hopeless in the face of undesired situations. They are poverty stricken due to unemployment in unfamiliar regions, they are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, their supporting cultures were orphans and elderly were cared for collectively has broken down. There has been an increase in the number of orphans to be looked after by relatives as a result of death of beloved ones.

Meeting Point international works together with sister organisations namely Meeting Point Kitgum, Hoima , and AVSI offices in the different regions of Uganda. This network enables follow of information, sharing of rich experinces which improves quality of service delivery .

The map below shows Kampala district and the neighbouring districts and town councils





ACCREDITATIONS:

Since its foundation in 1992 Meeting Point International has been very consistent in her work with vulnerable families. This has earned her recognition and credit from both local and international communities, through invitation to international meetings and conferences on the topic of HIV/ AIDS Care.

2001 – Press Conference “Cor Unum” project – Rome; **Rose Busingye’s speech to Pope John Paul II Lent**

2002 – Participation in the international World **AIDS Day, Kampala;**

2003 – **Awarded the ‘Servitor Pacis’ prize** by the “Path to Peace” Foundation presided by the Permanent Delegation of the Holy See at the United Nations.

2005 – Conference at the **Meeting for Friendship among Peoples**, Rimini (Italy)

2006 – Intervention at the **presentation of the encyclical letter** by His Holiness Benedict XVI “Deus Caritas Est”.

2008 – **Film Director Spike Lee presents the “Documentary Award”** in the first Babelgum Online Film Festival for the documentary “Greater – Defeating AIDS” (on the work of Rose Busingye and Meeting Point International).

2008 – The President of the Manhattan Borough of the City of New York (NY) declares May 14th, 2008 the **“Women of Meeting Point International of Uganda Appreciation Day”**

2009 – Participation at the **Synod of African Bishops** on Justice, Peace and Reconciliation; Rome (Vatican City)

2012 – Speaker at the 50th International Eucharistic Conference, Dublin. **Rose’s testimony International Eucharistic Congress**

CONTRIBUTIONS:

In 2014, Meeting Point International received 1,485,209,677 Uganda Shillings from project grants and other funds (private donors, institutions, consortium, foundations, and international NGOs).

OUR PARTNERS AND DONORS.

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A word of thanks to our Private and individual donors who continually support MEETING POINT INTERNATIONAL.

STORIES & HIGHLIGHTS

Vincent (a 17-year-old student at Luigi Giussani High School)

"I come from a poor family in Lira where I lived with my father, Onyenye. My mother is not there. I was brought to Kampala by a relative who loved me, and said I should come and study in Kampala because I had spent almost three or four years out of school due to financial problems. I met Rose, who told me "you are not defined by the circumstances around you; you have a value." **I almost cried again because it was my first time to see someone who is not my tribe mate saying I have a value.**

I was shocked and moved with in me totally, I failed to understand her because she embraced me with un usual love. When Aunt Rose started paying for me fees I had the problem of accommodation. MPI arranged for a place for me to stay. I found belonging with others and saw that out that my nothingness came the same one that has catered for and died for my happiness, justice and love".

Apolot Florence

I am 35 years old, from the eastern part of Uganda in a district called Bukedea. I am HIV positive. When I realized I was HIV positive I became worried, and weak. I thought I was going to die very soon. I would stay indoors because there was nobody in the community who I could tell my status to after all even my own relatives had rejected me. My family separated my plates, cups and wash basins fearing that I would infect them.

I came to MPI and found Teddy Bongomin who welcomed me to come to a meeting with the other women. At first I feared to talk to the women because there were very many. Over time I realized that I like singing, dancing and making beads. After sometime Auntie Rose came and she welcomed me too. I told Aunt Rose about my status and my children who were at home without school. She put me on treatment, and even the money for rent. When I began to feel better, and at a certain point I travel back to village as I was strong enough to live without the support of Meeting Point. life had again become difficult and I said to myself, "what is the problem now?!" I realized that even though I was on my medication there was a big part of life that was different in the village, and that was that I had nobody to talk to about my problems or share my happiness. ***"I realized that as much as the ARVs were helping me, it was still of no good without also having the love of others"***.

Josephine

I do not go to the Meeting Point because I have a problem. I go there and I say what urges in my heart and everybody listen to me. Nobody is afraid to speak with me, nobody says "I am too tired, this is too much..." They always listen to me. Every Monday Rose send me a message "How are you Josephine?". This simple thing make you feel that there is somebody who always cares for you. After one month of treatment I started to feel better, but was not the medicines which made me feel better: it was the compassion of the people. I know that at the end I will die – all of us will die – but I will have lived a full life.

Oyella Catherine

The quest to discover and learn something new is an intrinsic part of a person, every body wants to learn a skill for either pleasure or value addition. If little children find it very interesting, then why do adults often shy away from learning skills way back their age and yet the need for the skills is immeasurable in day to day life.

Oyella Catherine a 43 years old mother of four was no exception of this mind set, she joined the classes with disbelief whether she can also be able to read and write at her age.

No sooner had she started than she realized how interesting classes were, Oyella is now in four year of school, her efforts have paid back, she can read, write simple stories and she speaks English. This achievement has boosted her opportunities to acquire more skills, equipped with her new skills Oyella learnt tailoring because she can take measuring and put them in writing. Oyella secured a tailoring job at Meeting Point Int. she is engaged in making bark cloth bags, and other crafts , while at home , she make other products with a sewing machine she has acquired.

Akun Marcella

Marcella Akun A-KIR-0226-02 is 60 years of age, a widow from Kitgum district she lost her husband during Lord Resistance Army rebellion and she left her home area in 1989 at the height of the rebellion. Together with five her children they came and settled in Acholi quarters in Banda Parish Nakawa division Kampala district. Marcella is an illiterate who is not able to get a high paying job, she therefore resorted quarrying stones to earn a living. Marcella has been quarrying stones for the last two decades of her life in Kampala, she only visited her family when she goes to bury a dead relative or a friend and she comes back immediately after the burial is done. This was because she had no money to transport herself if she remained behind her relationship with her family in Kitgum weakened because she could spend a very longer without going back home, her children dropped out of school due lack of school fees, her two daughters got married at an early age and they have produced children all of whom are now living under Marcella's care in Kireka. One of her daughters passed away due to HIV/AIDS leaving behind two children. Marcella's life has been a life of hardship and suffering because of her low level of income hence she could not afford most basic needs for her family. Her family used to take porridge at lunch time and they eat a single meal which is usually served at 6:00pm this is a late lunch and early supper. Marcella's family is composed of ten members who solely depend on her as the main bread winner.

When SCORE project was introduced in 2012, Marcella was among the first people to embrace the activities of the project most especially the VSLA model. She had been saving some of her little income with other saving groups which had more than 80 members, this groups operated with lots of irregularities because they did not have constitutions to govern operations. Marcella lost most of her savings due lack of transparency in her former groups. Marcella received VSLA training and together with her fellow women who had suffered from abuses of their former groups, Marcella and her friends then formed the first VSLA group under Meeting Point International in 2013.

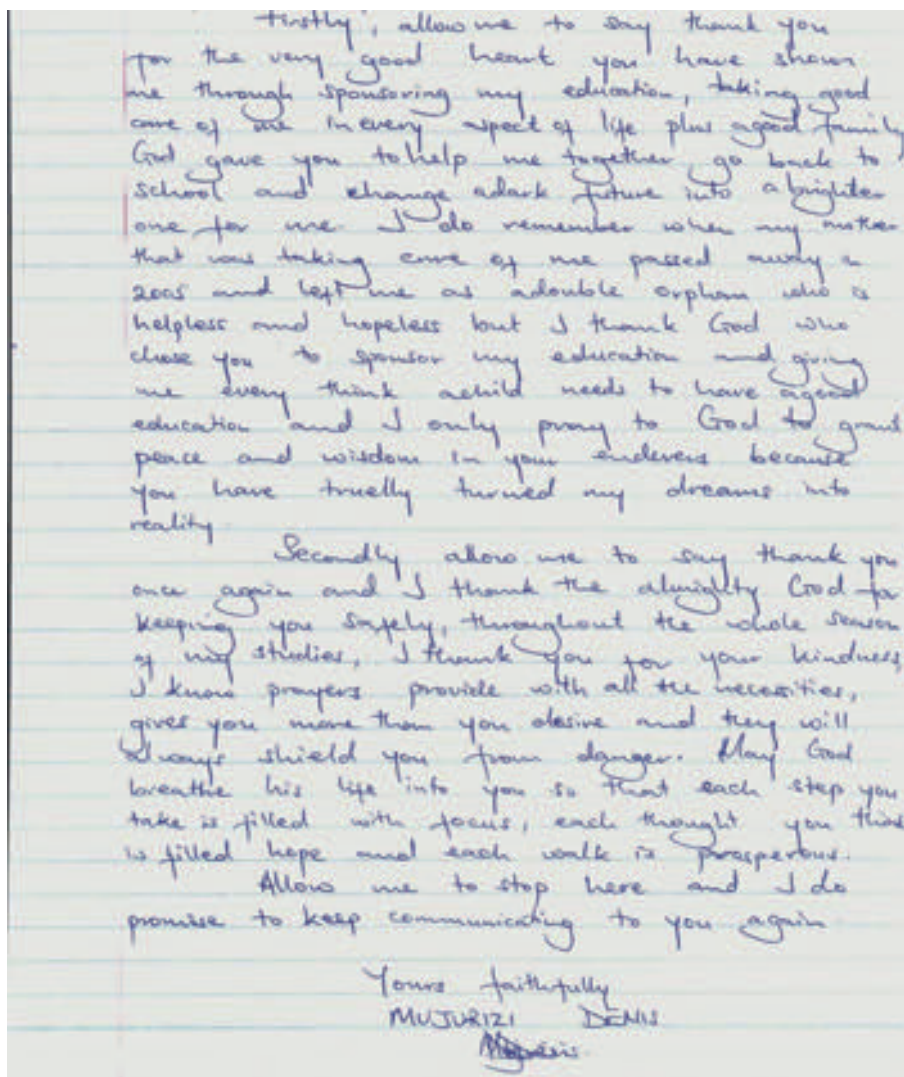
Her group is called *Dii Cwinyi* which means "be patient", in her first cycle she bought all the shares allocated to her, she got 530,000/= this cycle she managed to buy all the shares given to her again and she got 844,700/= . Marcella is a very hard working person, early every morning she goes to Nakawa market where she buys vegetables and fruits which she sells in front of her house; she is always ready to run back to Nakawa market whenever there is urgent demand for an item. Marcella has been borrowing a lot from her group and her business has grown she also started another income generating activity. She often buys second hand cloths which she takes to her village in Kitgum to exchange with produce Simsim, beans, peas, and ground nuts etc which are on high demand in Kampala.

Marcella brings up to seven sacks of assorted produce which she sells just in front of her house, the produce takes less than a fortnight to sell out. Marcella is in two VSLA groups, her second group was formed by members of her first group who wanted to save more of their money without inconveniencing other members who cannot afford to buy shares of value more than 3000/=. Her second group is called *Dii Cwinyi two*, their share value is 10,000/=. the group saves monthly and it is led by the same chairperson of the first group. The second was established at the beginning of this year.

Marcella makes maximum use of her saving and borrowing opportunities, in this way Marcella has been able to save and borrow consistently as much as possible, Marcella has constructed a house in her village where she sleeps whenever she goes to home for her business trips.

Her family now eats at least three times a day, her elder son Nyerere Julius A-KIR-0226-06 is 32 years had dropped out of while in senior two, rejoined school in 2013 and this year he managed to sit for Uganda Certificate of education. Marcella says three years from now she wants to buy a car because in her clan nobody has ever bought a car, this is her dream and she wants to make her children proud. All the four orphans under her care now attend school regularly because Marcella can afford to provide for them scholastic materials. Marcella is very active in activities of SCORE project and she is a role model to the young women in her neighbourhood because despite her age and the burden of looking after orphans she is able to buy all shares allocated to her. Marcella now visits her village often during her business trips, she is able to take the orphans for holidays in Kitgum and ties with her relatives has greatly improved, they also come to visit her in Kampala many times. This kind of transformation is a result of SCORE interventions in the live of Marcella and many others.

Mujurizi Denis: I am grateful



Acomo Alice

She is a member of Dii Cwinyi group in Kireka- Nakawa, Kampala, she is 59 years and a widow who is suffering from HIV/AIDS. She has been able to expand her bead making project with the money she got during the sharing out she no longer goes to the stone quarry to crash stones in order to get additional income. Acomo Alice attended community skills training which provided her with new knowledge to create new designs for her necklaces, she also attended financial literacy where she was taught how to manage her finances. Her only challenge was how to get capital, Acomo joined VSLA and started saving the little money from the stone quarry and after sharing out she injected her money to expand her business. She is now able to buy the papers, vanish, strings and other materials for making beads in bulk to make more beads to sell.

Keep in touch!

Meeting Point International

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