

## **A Home for HIV/AIDS Orphans in Uganda**

By David Albert

The last visit Dr. Connie Vasek, our U.S. medical officer, and I paid in Uganda was with URICT-Uganda ([www.urictuganda.org](http://www.urictuganda.org)), based in Kamuli, in the eastern part of the country.

I had been looking forward to meeting their director Gabula Milton Andrew in person for years! Andrew is as close to a walking saint on this earth as I know, something I don't say lightly (and his saintliness sometimes gets him into trouble.) He founded URICT-Uganda some 15 years ago to fight child sacrifice, a horrific practice in eastern Uganda that claims more than a hundred children each year. Along the way, he has ended up with an orphanage for 50 kids with HIV, a school for 375 children with a HIV, a vocational training institute, and a program to support grandparents who take in grandchildren when their parents have died of AIDS.

It does get him into trouble. In 2013, he tried to rescue a boy who had been kidnapped for sacrifice, was beaten, and then was left for dead. He didn't die, but completely lost one kidney, and the other was heavily damaged. He tried to skimp on medical care. And then further trying to to save money for his kids, he had a kidney transplant done in Uganda (a BIG mistake), which was completely botched, and he almost died. A year later, from what seemed like his deathbed, friends rushed him to a hospital in Nairobi for another one. But it has been an ongoing struggle for him to use what little in the way of resources he has on the necessary anti-rejection drugs rather than for the children. (Yes, we are all on his case!) But he now looks great!

In late 2014, Andrew wrote me that he had four children in the hospital with waterborne illnesses, and that if he paid the hospital bill, they had no money for food. I told him that while I could send him a small, personal amount for food, we were in the water business, not the food business, and could virtually guarantee that this would never happen again. We arranged for the delivery of just two BioSand Filters (at a cost of \$100). In three weeks, he wrote back excitedly that there wasn't a single case of diarrhea, nor dysentery, not even a single stomachache! Through Friendly Water for the World's Card Fund program (that provides Filters to orphanages, schools, health care facilities, and homes of families impacted by HIV), and with funds (\$1,290) from Crossroads Community Church in Astoria, Oregon, we provided 24 more Filters, which are now found all over the campus, and in the homes of the grandparents. There are NO MORE waterborne illnesses among the children, with massive savings in medical care. Through another grant from LUSH Charity Pot, our Uganda Country Representative Richard Kyambadde built two large rainwater catchment systems so that the orphanage/school never runs out of water.

Last summer, with funds provided by West Olympia Rotary Club (\$1,800), Richard trained youth at URICT-Uganda in fabricating, distributing, installing, and maintaining BioSand Water Filters. Since then, they have built and sold some 600 Filters, and have backorders of more than 500. (Hint: they need funds for four more steel molds - \$2,068 - would anyone like to chip in? Please?)

We visited some of the homes of the grandparents who received Filters. They are extremely grateful, and note that the change in the health of the kids is nothing short of miraculous. With the savings in medical expenses, the kids are back in school (we visited all the classrooms), and there is some food on the table. We are hoping to work with Water Charity's "Permagardens" program this summer to teach them to build compact, easily maintained home gardens to improve nutrition (and reduce costs further).

This time there were tears in MY eyes. I have been privileged, honored, and humbled to meet such people, and to count them among my friends. They are to be found all over our little earth, and together, we can do such GREAT things.

And that includes you. We – and that means YOU – are Friendly Water for the World!

*David Albert is a member of Klamath Falls Friends Church (NWYM).*