

## The Rape Hurts Foundation in Uganda

*by David Albert*

In Jinja, Uganda, Dr. Connie Vasek – our U.S. Medical Officer – and I got to visit the Rape Hurts Foundation (RHF), and the astonishing, amazing, breathtaking work of their director Hellen Tanyinga. RHF is at the center of ongoing struggles against rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse of children, and all forms of domestic violence, as well as child sacrifice (!) in eastern Uganda. Hellen has recruited an extraordinary staff that provides everything from respite for those raped and abused, a hostel for children, counseling, support groups, links to medical services, and advocacy in the courts and in the halls of power. And they do this on the most minimal of shoestrings.



*Connie Vasek, Hellen Tanyinga, Gabula, David Albert*

But not for long. Since receiving training in fabricating, distributing, installing, and maintaining BioSand Water Filters from Friendly Water for the World last July (with a small grant from the West Olympia Rotary Club), RHF has been busy fulfilling orders for more than 2,500 Filters, and more orders continue to stream in, as people now recognize the massive differences they can make in health, and in medical savings. Some 22 village youth, all of whom had been unemployed, and now busy manufacturing nine Filters each day. One group of women is selling Filters into their community – they purchase them at \$33, and sell them for \$45, with the profit going into their own savings fund. One of RHF's staff has a plan to link the purchase of Filters with a requirement to join a local all-women's savings club.

We visited with 11 families, many of whom were affected by HIV, all of whom had received their Filters within the past five months. The changes they noted were extraordinary. One poor woman excitedly told us that none of her children were ever sick anymore, and now she had extra money to feed them more nutritious food. Another couple told us they were



*Apartments in Jinja*

saving about \$100 a month in medical care, and were using the funds to build a new house! We met women who started new shops (and among other things, were selling bags of clean water from them, at one fifth the cost of bottled water.) We met with one Muslim widow with 11 children who now had funds to send them all to school, and invited people over from the mosque every Friday to taste the water. Many of the people we met were almost in tears of joy. We have all the interviews on tape, and hope to turn them into a video.

Hellen also noted that, at this rate, RHF may be entirely economically self-sufficient within the year. This would be a welcome development, as for so long they have barely maintained themselves hand-to-mouth. Plans are afoot to purchase a manual interlocking brickmaking machine, to use to build a warehouse and also for the bases of rainwater catchment



*Biosand filters*

systems, and to train people in permagardens – small, homebased gardens that can radically increase food production. There will soon be a project in Friendly soapmaking. We are also dreaming of adding teams of women to join our Friendly Water Corps, to repair wellheads and springheads, and, perhaps to create teams of all-women plumbers. Byonna Bisoboka! Everything is Possible! (in Luganda).

of the Friendly Water family. Oh, and the cost – the cost for the initial training and equipping of the Rape Hurts Foundation was roughly \$2,600 – though they have since borrowed seven more steel molds (each mold in Uganda costs us \$517). Again, the lesson is that very small amounts of money, intelligently applied by people waiting to make use of their ingenuity and creativity, can make massive differences in people's lives. And we are privileged to be along for the ride.

We are so proud that Hellen and the Rape Hurts Foundation are now part

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