



Dining for Women

***Making Connections
July 2008
East Africa
Uganda***

We're in East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania) again, supporting the scholarship program, Growth Through Learning. March, June, and November 2006 and February and August 2007—we get to East Africa a lot. And we should; it's among the most desperately poor regions of the world. It's also fascinating. Especially if you are new to DFW, I encourage you to look through the editions of *MC* for those months, especially last August's *FYI* on the Millennium Development Goals (see below). This time, we're focusing particularly on Uganda.

Topics relevant to East Africa in past editions of MC:

1. *FYI August 2007* At the beginning of the new millennium, leaders of 191 nations, including the United States, agreed on a plan to cut extreme poverty around the world in half by 2015. They outlined eight interrelated goals necessary for that, the Millennium Development Goals or “MDGs.” Fulfilling them would mean, among other things, that 500 million people would be lifted out of extreme poverty. And most relevant to our support of Growth for Learning this month, 35 million girls would be able to attend school. This *FYI* gives a brief overview of the MDGs, focusing especially the goals directly related to women (all of them are, of course), and on East Africa's prospects for meeting the goals at the halfway point.
2. *FYI March 2006* focused on Kenya and discussed customary laws and lack of property rights for women, female genital mutilation (FGM), and women and the environment.
- 3.. *FYI June 2006* followed up on the March topics, focusing on Uganda and Tanzania (pp.3-4). See especially the role that education plays in reducing domestic violence in Tanzania. There's also a Special Focus section (pp. 4-5) on the war in Uganda—see esp. the discussion of lost educational opportunities there.
4. *FYI November 2006* focused on the complex interconnections between environmental sustainability, women's economic dilemmas, and the spread of HIV/AIDS.
5. *FYI February 2007* discussed HIV/AIDS in Uganda (updated in this MC) and efforts to reduce the high percentage of girls who drop out of school in Tanzania (quite relevant to our current project).

You can access all past MCs on our program schedule page:
http://www.diningforwomen.org/?page_id=12/ .

Announcements!

Do you have a Sister? We'll be supporting the work of Women for Women International in August, this time in The Democratic Republic of Congo in central Africa. If you have sponsored or are sponsoring a woman through WfWI (when we supported its work in Bosnia or Rwanda, for example), I'd love to be able to share your experience and her

story with members in next month's *MC*. Please contact me as soon as possible and no later than July 20.

Calling all cooks! We'll be doing another round of the "best of DFW member recipes" featuring ingredients we share in common with women in DR Congo for August. Any style, any course. Send me dishes you love that highlight any of the following (and note how many will be in season in August): tomatoes, peppers (chiles and sweet), melon, sweet potatoes, millet, cassava, plaintain, okra, peanuts or peanut butter, field peas (black-eyed or other), green beans, greens, cucumber, eggplant, mango, banana, pineapple, corn (cornmeal or fresh corn), citrus, and coconut. You can include meat, poultry, or fish dishes with one or more of the above ingredients as well. I'll need these by July 20 but would appreciate knowing that you plan to send me something as soon as possible. Please include the source of the recipe if you know it, your name and chapter, and a little background on the recipe or yourself.

Email: corrienorman1959@yahoo.com

FYI: Dianah's Plea

I wasn't going to do a new *FYI*. I'm pressed for time this month, we have so much material on East Africa already, and the *FYI* from last August contains such important information. And then I got a letter from Dianah. Maria Goretti Dianah Nalubega, that is, a former GTL scholarship student who is now a school nurse. Besides telling us about her relationship with GTL, her family, and her education, Dianah chose to tell us about her current work and especially her concerns about HIV/AIDS. She even wrote a poem about it. I couldn't let that go. HIV/AIDS has been with us for so long now. Unless directly confronted by it, and with everything else that is so overwhelming in the world, we can too easily forget. I even forgot that I had written about AIDs in Uganda just over a year ago. Dianah will never be able to forget. As a nurse and an African woman, she will most likely face it every day of her life.

By the beginning of this century, Uganda had become a beacon of hope in the dark and unrelenting story of AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. A massive awareness campaign involving a wide range of non-profit groups and fronted by President Museveni himself combined frank information about HIV transmission and the destigmatizing message that "anybody can get AIDS" with increased availability of testing and condoms as well as advice about delaying sexual activity for youth and fidelity in marriage. This multi-faceted but simple approach, known as "ABC" (Abstain, Be Faithful, Use Condoms) has been praised for its almost miraculous effectiveness. In less than a decade, Uganda brought down its HIV prevalence rate from around 20 to just under 6 % in 2003. Sadly and alarmingly, the hope has been dimming, however. HIV/AIDS infections have been on the incline again: 6.4% in 2004-5 and 6.7% in 2006 among the overall population. But even more alarming news: newly documented cases of HIV infection have doubled since 2003.

This turn coincided with a change in approach by the Ugandan government, spearheaded by First Lady Janet Museveni and some religious leaders and spurred on by policies of the U.S. government and some faith-based organizations through which it funnels aid to Uganda for AIDS treatment and prevention. The new approach favors an emphasis on abstinence while funding for condoms has been curbed relative to other efforts. Under the provisions of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief of 2003 (PEPFAR), the largest AIDs support package by any government to date, one-third of HIV prevention funding coming from the U.S. must focus exclusively on abstinence education. A number of organizations involved in fighting AIDS in Africa and even the UN Secretary-General's special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa have sharply criticized both the Ugandan and the U.S. governments for pushing an approach that has proven repeatedly ineffective in both HIV/AIDS and teen pregnancy prevention in the U.S. and elsewhere, according to numerous studies (some sponsored by the U.S. government itself).

Critics say publicity events such as “virginity parades” celebrating youths who have pledged to delay sex until marriage and new restrictions on condom availability to youths not only ignore the studies but also send potentially deadly messages in a culture where sexual activity begins early, poverty is rampant, and girls and women have very little control over their own sexuality or ability to support themselves financially. Opponents say they don’t want a “condom culture” imposed on Uganda.

It is important to try to understand both sides, and many in middle. At play here are complex cultural, religious, and (of course) political and economic issues. PBS’s Frontline aired a short documentary on the controversy just after I had written about it in the February edition of *MC* last year. I urge you to take eight minutes to view it because it does a very good job of presenting the views of a number of Ugandans involved in AIDS prevention efforts, including two religious leaders on opposite sides of the “condom controversy.”

http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/rough/2007/07/uganda_the_cond.html

While the documentary does an excellent job of presenting many of the issues involved, it does not emphasize enough the implications for Ugandan women. Indeed, Human Rights Watch and other organizations worry most about girls and women in this policy shift. Already, according to a 2002 report, six girls were being infected for every boy in Uganda. Currently the rate is 7.9% of women and 6% men. Some analysts see a connection between this and the large numbers of young girls who are “married off” to older men in Uganda. Over half of Uganda’s girls have sex before age 17, a high percentage of those with older men. In other words, even young girls who may want to remain virgins, who may have signed a pledge card to the effect, often do not have a choice in a society where women often have little control over their own sexuality. Further, this is a country that has been at war, where numerous people have been displaced, where rape and sexual slavery are used as tools of war, where poverty is high in general. A prevention policy that focuses on abstinence and marital fidelity may do little good for the numbers of women and girls forced into prostitution or put in extremely vulnerable situations because of poverty, abandonment, or the taking of their property by relatives (which happens with frequency when women are widowed). One estimate places the number of prostitutes under age 24 at 65 percent. It may not help faithful wives in polygamous circumstances, those who become “inherited” by a dead spouse’s male relatives, or those whose husbands require fidelity of them while being promiscuous themselves. It may not help the one out of every three Ugandan women victimized by gender-based violence or the 40% who experienced domestic violence; studies show these women have triple the risk of HIV infection.

Sadly, nor may the message about condom protection help them if women cannot persuade their partners to use them. But stigmatizing condom usage and making it more difficult to obtain condoms will only make that harder. And stigmatizing the victims of HIV/AIDS who have little control over their own bodies may not only be unfair but also further the epidemic as it makes seeking testing and treatment more difficult. Mother-to child transmission of HIV is an enormous part of the tragic picture of AIDS in Uganda, where only 12% of HIV-positive pregnant women got antiretroviral therapy according to a 2005 study. Critics of the policy shift are not criticizing the promotion of fidelity or the delay of sexual activity by young people as such, but they are adamant that the multi-pronged ABC approach of the nineties is the best way to prevent HIV/AIDS. To protect women and their children, however, they insist that, education for girls and empowering women to be able to support themselves as well as providing them with the information and apparatus to protect themselves, is necessary. A micro-loan or a secondary education the GTL scholarships make possible can also be powerful AIDS prevention methods. Even more so when the students who benefit from such scholarships go on to be social workers, teachers, and nurses like Dianah who are on the frontlines of the fight against AIDS.

This controversy may be coming to an important turning point, not just because it's clear that HIV/AIDS is rising in Uganda but also because reauthorization for PEPFAR is imminent. In April, the House of Representatives approved the reauthorization for another five years, almost doubling the original budget to \$50 billion and eliminating the abstinence-based program requirement. In the Senate, where Senators John McCain and Barack Obama are co-sponsors of similar legislation, the vote had been held up by a few senators until very recently. On June 25, an agreement was reached and it looks very likely that the bill will be passed just after the July 4 holiday. Congressional leaders think the timing is good—it will highlight the need for AIDS relief and encourage other wealthy nations just as the G8 begins to meet on July 8. Good timing is relative here—it's too late for many in Uganda, but let's hope it is indeed good timing for many more. The bill still has to be signed by the President.

Humanitarian Agencies such as Physicians for Social Responsibility have praised other changes in the reauthorization bill as well as the elimination of the abstinence rule. For one, they laud the new focus on women: "Women's unique vulnerability to HIV is explicitly discussed in both House and Senate versions of the bill, more than in PEPFAR 1. There is language in both bills to support significant and substantial initiatives intended to boost the status of women and reduce their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS." They also urge leaders to take that focus even further, citing not only the direct physical vulnerability of women but the extraordinary economic and personal burdens that fall on women as caregivers for others.

You'll read Dianah's letter and poem in *Voices*. It's really a prayer peppered with a faithful frustration and fierce commitment to saving the young people with whom she works. Along with her urgency and resolve, something else stuck out for me. After describing the social and physical devastation of AIDs, she ends with a list of prevention methods. These are on her mind not just because she memorized them in school but because, as she tells us in her letter, she now frequently talks to her students about AIDS. Dianah advises abstinence foremost "for the people." She specifically tells "elders" to be faithful to their partners. A and B. And C? While she does not say the word "condom," she urges a third measure, "visit medical centers to get information." Perhaps she has it in mind but didn't feel she should or could say it directly. Can she say it in her school? Is funding for prevention programming there tied to PEPFAR? If so, how will it change? These are the kinds of dilemmas and questions many in Uganda face these days. They reflect the division of many on many levels in the fight against this disastrous disease. Dianah concludes her poem with a fervent plea, not to God, but to all of us: "Leaders, teachers, elders, parents/Let us come together to fight AIDS./We can therefore save the young generations of Mother Africa!" AMEN.

Recommended Books and Films

For books and films about East Africa, please see *MC August 07* for past recommendations. This month's book isn't about Uganda or east Africa, but I felt compelled to write about it anyway. It's about yet another unfolding tragedy in Africa, the ongoing crisis in Zimbabwe. It will probably be a long time before Zimbabwe is stable enough that we could even entertain the notion of supporting work there. The world, it seems, can do little more than watch at this point. But we can choose not to shake our heads and look away. We can try to understand—though so much of this tragic story is incomprehensible—so that when we can act (and when our leaders act) we can be better prepared. The book is another beaut by renowned British journalist Christina Lamb (*The Sewing Circles of Herat*). It tells the stories, often in their own words, of Nigel and Aquí, a white farmer and his children's black nanny, of the different and yet same country they know, of a friendship that overcomes enormous odds, and of a beautiful land so tragically and unnecessarily ruined by corruption, greed, and madness. I

couldn't put it down. *Christina Lamb, House of Stone: The True Story of a Family Divided in War-Torn Zimbabwe (Lawrence Hill Books, 2006).*

Socially Responsible Shopping

Also see this month's Dining with Women section for another source.

*Ten Thousand Villages carries a number of artisanal items from Uganda and Tanzania. I'm particularly partial to the Uganda baskets. www.tenthousandvillages.com

*In tasting coffees new to me recently, I was impressed with Mirembe Kawomera from the slopes of Mount Elgon in Mbale, Uganda. Mirembe Kawomera means "delicious peace." It comes from an interfaith cooperative of 558 small scale farmers—Jewish, Christian, and Muslim neighbors committed to living together in peace and make great coffee. It's organic, fair trade, and kosher and available from Thanksgiving Coffee (a California company that sells many types of "just cups"). You can read more about Mirembe Kawomera and the cooperative and order it at www.thanksgivingcoffee.com. Have some at your meeting—maybe iced if your weather is like ours here in Greenville!

*This one's for those of us who garden particularly. Many seed companies contribute to worthy projects, so ask about your favorites. One of mine is Renee's Garden Seeds. Renee's gives seed to an education program in Uganda that helps rural families victimized by HIV/AIDS. The program, run by the Center for Environment, Technology, and Rural Development, trains families, many of whom are women-headed, to grow a variety of vegetables, thus providing a means to feed themselves and earn income. You can see photos of some of the women in the project at <http://www.reneesgarden.com/articles/donations-07.html>.

* (*New!*) If you love justice, humanity, ecology, and great colorful jewelry, you'll love this. The Paper to Pearls Project supports women in refugee camps in northern Uganda by providing them with the means to make beautiful beaded jewelry and earn some income. Surprise: the beads are hand-rolled from recycled paper (you'd never know!). Check it out: <http://www.papertopearls.org/store.htm>.

Dining with Women: Open Sesame...

(All of the East Africa or EA-inspired recipes in past MCs are listed at the end of this section. Please feel free to have "leftovers" as well as new dishes this month. For more recipes from Uganda see <http://www.recipezaar.com/cookbook.php?bookid=214875>.)

Our socially responsible shopper and leader of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Chapter Carolyn Mayers didn't know that when she sent me what seemed to be a simple—even lackluster—recipe for this month's MC, she'd be sending me the key to a Pandora's Box. Or did she? Both of us are addicted to research, especially when it comes to food, and often get sucked in to chasing ingredients around the internet together.

The recipe is "Spinach and *Simsim*" or sesame seed. I had run across other Ugandan recipes using *simsim*, so I decided to follow up. Turns out that several species of the wild sesame plant are indigenous to sub-Saharan Africa and that Ugandans have been using them for a very long time. A common traditional use is to make a paste from them to thicken and flavor stews or sauces. Although peanuts and peanut butter have gradually become substitutes for sesame in some dishes, domesticated white sesame is one of Uganda's major export crops and is still used in cooking, especially in the North.

The Pandora's—or really, treasure—box that the hunt for information on sesame led me to is a website called, "Wise African Living." Its contributors are Ugandan women, many from the Acholi tribe in the North who have been displaced by the war there and who live in a makeshift village known as Acholi quarter outside Kampala. How on earth do these women

blog? Well, they are participants in the programs of Life in Africa. LiA (<http://lifeinafrica.com>) was begun in 1999 by an American stay-at-home mom, Christina Jordan, who lives in Uganda and wanted to use the internet to help others in her community. It brings together several self-help, empowerment, and microcredit initiatives. If you'd like to check out its store where you can purchase items made in some of their programs, go to <http://lifeinafrica.com/shop/>. LiA gives its members the know-how and means to tell their stories on the LiA blog and to share recipes and other remembrances of their traditional culture through Wise African Living. The recipes and stories below come from those sites unless otherwise noted. I've copied them pretty much verbatim; it's a rare chance to get recipes firsthand from Uganda. For more, see <http://ourlia.blogspot.com/> and <http://wiseafricanliving.blogspot.com/>. But I warn you, take some time. Opening those links is going to lead you into a treasure trove of food and folk traditions that sadly are being displaced as the displaced members of LiA so often remind. That they can use the internet to preserve those traditions while they put their lives back together is enriching to them and all of us who open those links.

Here's a memory about *simsim* from Josephine Lanyero's childhood. She is an almost-forty single mother who works as a children's caretaker with a non-profit and is a member of LiA.

As for the mothers when it's time for harvesting simsim, they always carry bundles of simsim for the children to crack the pods so as to get the seeds out. In the process, lessons are given to the children, for example you find that when there is a stubborn child, they bring in a proverb like "Dyel ma lapele tur i bad dero," meaning "a stubborn goat always breaks at the granary." The elder is telling you that if you don't listen to what you are told, you will always get problems. Sometimes they say, Latek keng wii ogwang ma otwo," meaning, "Those who never want to be sent (on an errand) will always miss good things." You find children really changed and behaving well, such were the wise ways our parents used to educate their young ones. I practically attended such lectures and still adore my parents for that, but things have long changed especially with the current war situation that our children are living in, sometimes you find their characters intolerable, how I wish we could go back to that kind of life!

Note: In January, Canada recalled organic Ugandan sesame seed when some samples tested positive for salmonella. Around the same time, a Pennsylvania distributor voluntarily recalled sesame seed as well, but its origin wasn't acknowledged in news reports. Both recalls ended months ago. For more see http://efoodalert.blogspot.com/2008_01_27_archive.html.

Ugandan Spinach and Simsim

adapted fr. <http://www.recipezaar.com/recipe/236163>

1/2 cup sesame seeds
3-4 tablespoons water (as needed)
1 (10 ounce) package frozen chopped spinach, thawed
1 tablespoon butter
salt and pepper to taste

In a heavy pot, combine sesame seeds and water. Stir in spinach. Add some water if necessary to keep from scorching, but use the smallest amount necessary. Bring to a boil. Simmer until seeds are cooked, 10 to 15 minutes. Add butter, salt and pepper just before serving. Serve as a side or over rice. Serves 4 as a side.

Lakotokoto Simsim Sauce with Meat

Evalyn Akwero is a mother of three who was displaced by the war in northern Uganda and now lives in the Acholi quarters. She says, “If it was not the war, perhaps I would not know what life in Africa is all about!” But Evalyn certainly knows a lot about Acholi culture before the war. She contributed this description of a traditional treatment of meat with sesame. Now, I don’t expect you to actually make this, but if you do, send pictures. And time yourself—Evalyn says the “whole process” takes her one hour!

1/2kg (a pound or so) *simsim*

1/2kg (a pound or so) smoked meat (See explanation by Florence Abalo in recipe below.)
two tomatoes

Wash *simsim*. Dry *simsim* in the sun. Pound. Drip some water in the pounded *simsim*. Squeezing is done to get the oil (from the seeds). Boil the meat. Drop the pounded *simsim* in while the meat is boiling. Cut your two tomatoes then add on mixed meat and *simsim* and enjoy either with smoked or millet bread and you will discover the secret.

Smoked Beef in Peanut Butter Sauce

I find the development of traditional foods fascinating and we have a great example here. Looking at Evalyn’s recipe and this one contributed by Florence Abalo, we see two developments in “one of the most famous dishes that originates from Acholiland,” according to Florence. She explains the first: “Initially, the most preferable one was the game meat as the Acholi people were known to be hunters, it was their main delicacy. These days though, things have quite changed, and beef is instead smoked to give a similar taste.” The second adaptation is the use of (processed) peanut butter instead of a homemade sesame paste. To see even further adaptation in a recipe more suited to our kitchens, see the Ugandan Beef Stew in *MC June 2006*. It’s very good and even with “updates” and shortcuts not too far from the “original.” If you have access to game—say deer stew meat—you might even get closer. And about the “original” dish—meat and sesame could go far back, but tomato is a fairly recent introduction in African cooking. It was probably brought by the Portuguese from South America around the 16th century.

1 kg (around 2 1/2 lbs) smoked beef (fillet or top side)

1/4 kg (around 8oz.) smooth peanut butter

3 medium-size tomatoes

1 1/2 litre water (6-7 cups or so)

Salt to taste

Boil smoked meat with salt in water, until tender. Add chopped tomatoes and boil for further 5 minutes. Remove from heat and separate from cooking liquid and reserve liquid. Mix peanut butter with a little cooking liquid. Stir until thick and smooth with wooden spoon, adding remaining liquid gradually, until sauce is slightly thin and very smooth. Check seasoning. Warm gently on low heat taking care not to boil it. Serve warm or hot, with boiled rice, or *posho* (corn bread), *matooke*, (green bananas) or sweet potatoes.

Smoked Fish Stew

“My names are Zarina Abdulghani, a mother of three children and a widow, it was when my husband died and I was wondering helpless without any thing to do. I did not know any thing to do with making good dish though I was good at cleaning and house keeping. But I came to learn all this from the gift mom "Christina." Before I joined Life in Africa, the situation was not simple and I did not know that a poor widow would be like I’m now! I’m so grateful to see that my children are in good school and I have managed to build a small house.” Zarina’s smoked fish

stew is a favorite among the expats for whom she works as a cook. She makes it with smoked tilapia from Lake Victoria, but any smoked white fish (like trout) would work well. Note that it's similar to other east African fish recipes in our archive, showing the Indian influence that is especially associated with Mozambiquan and Kenyan cuisine.

2 cloves crushed garlic
1 finely chopped onion
a bit of cooking oil
2-3 ripe tomatoes, diced
3T tomato paste
water
1t curry powder
a pinch of dill
1 medium smoked fish without bones, shredded or cut into cubes

Cook the onions and garlic in oil until translucent. Add the diced tomatoes, and cook until soft. Stir in tomato paste, curry powder and dill. Allow the mixture to simmer for 5-10 minutes. Add a bit of water if it becomes too thick. Add the smoked fish at the last minute, just cooking it long enough to warm. Garnish with a sprinkle of dill. Serve over rice (or pasta), and enjoy!

Chicken Fried with Rice

Margaret Asiimwe says that "Chicken fried with rice is the best dish that most people in my community like." She learned it in her catering class. Reading through the recipe, I couldn't help but wonder if that class wasn't in the U.S. heartland rather than Uganda, what with "lite" soy and Eggbeaters(!). Just goes to show you, it's a small culinary world after all.

1/2 c sliced green onions.
1/4 c sliced celery
1/4 c chopped red bell pepper.
1 crushed clove garlic
1/2t grated ginger root
1/4t crushed red pepper flakes
2t peanut oil
6T eggbeaters (or a couple of beaten eggs)
3 c cooked regular long grain rice, prepared in un-salted water
2 c cooked diced chicken
2T reduced-sodium soy sauce
1t sugar

Heat oil in a large non-stick skillet, over high heat and sauté green onions, celery, bell pepper, garlic, ginger crushed red pepper until tender-crisp. Pour eggbeaters into skillet, cook while stirring occasionally until mixture is set. Stir in rice, chicken, soy sauce and sugar and cook until heated through.

And finally, just for some summery fun...

Pineapple Buganda

adapted from Bea Sandler, The African Cookbook and <http://www.recipezaar.com/172700>

It may make you feel like you're on a Caribbean Island but it comes from Uganda. Play around with the amounts to suit your own tastes and tolerances (you can leave out the rum altogether).

2 c fresh pineapple, very ripe and cut in small pieces
4T brown sugar

1/2 c heavy or whipping cream or coconut milk (not coconut cream/Coco Lopez or lite coconut milk)
6 ounces white rum
1t vanilla extract
1 c crushed ice
mint sprigs, cherries or sliced pineapple to garnish

Blend until smooth and thick. Pour in frosted glasses and garnish with mint. Makes 2-4 drinks, depending on how tall your glasses are. Very pretty in martini glasses.

East African Recipes in Past MCs

Appetizers

Toasted Corn Salsa/Salad with Polenta Rounds (August 07)

Tanzanian Chutney (June 06)

Avocado Mousse with Pineapple Salsa (February 07)

Main Dishes and Sides

Ugandan Beef Stew (June 06)

Kunde (black-eyed peas with tomatoes, peanut butter, spinach) (March 06)

Mombasa Kofta Kabobs (curried lamb or beef kabobs) (March 06)

Mtuza wa Samaki (fish baked in curry sauce) (November 06)

Wali wa nazi (coconut rice) (November 06)

Grits and Greens (November 06)

Samaka wa Nazi/Kamba (coconut curry with fish, shrimp, or kidney beans) (Feb. 07)

Desserts

Melon Sorbet (Aug. 07)

Almond/Fig Biscuits (Nov. 06)

Mango-Papaya Kulfi (Feb. 07)

Drinks

The Best-Easiest Lemonade (Aug. 07)

Voices: Maria Goretti Dianah Nalubega

Please see FYI above for more background. I hope Mike was able to put Dianah's photo on our home page (the technical magic he has to work for us sometimes!). If not, you can see it on the program schedule page along with other student photos and profiles. A note on her name: Maria Goretti is a popular Italian Catholic girl-saint. Naming girls (and girls' schools) after her is quite popular in some places. I've copied her letter and poem exactly as she wrote them—nice work for writing in a second language. Nice work indeed.

Dianah's Letter

I am Maria Goretti Diana Nalubega aged 24 years. I come from a family of five children and I'm the first-born child. My mother died when our last born was only two years old, so my father struggled alone to bring us up and to educate us. Being a farmer on a small plot of land, whatever he planted was for us to eat and nothing for sale and so during the whole course of my studying both at primary and secondary schools, I was being constantly sent home to collect school fees which was not there. When I completed Senior 3 in December 2003, my father told me that he could not push further in Senior 4 to sit for the National Exams because he had no money to do that and he advised me to go and look for work like becoming a house girl somewhere. I accepted what he told me

because I also saw that my father though willing to educate me, he had no money. I went to a Catholic Parish near my home looking for work and there I came across Sister Immy (now dead) who was the secretary to the Bishop of that Diocese. I introduced myself to her and asked her for some work to do to enable me earn a living as I had no hope of continuing with studying.

Sister Immy felt pity from what I told her and told me that if I pray hard, God might hear my prayer because there was an organization in USA that sponsored the education of needy girls like me. Sr. Immy was so kind because she immediately gave me GTL forms to fill and to take them to the Head Master of the school where I was studying for recommendation which he did. In January 2004, Sister Immy broke very good news that GTL had accepted to sponsor me!! I was then privileged to continue with my Senior 4 that same year and passed well my Uganda National exams after which I joined Nursing.

Life is so full of ups and downs because when I was almost a year to complete my nursing course, Sister Immy died in January of 2006 and for sure, every GTL girl in Uganda knew that Sister's death meant the end of our studying as she was the GTL coordinator of Uganda. Luckily enough, GTL was able to identify another coordinator who is also a nun, Sister Salome Nambi to replace the last Sister Immy, who is also carrying on well the work of being a coordinator. And that is why I was able to complete my nursing course in November 2006. After completing, I approached our coordinator and Sr. Salome also being a Headmistress of a Girls' High School, she got me a job as a School Nurse in one of the nearby schools where her school is located. The school where I work is called St. Joseph's Senior Secondary Kakindu and it is a mixed one with almost a total population of 600 students.

As a school nurse working among the youth between the age of 13-20, I constantly advise them to be very careful in the way they behave in matters concerning their sexual conduct otherwise AIDS has no cure yet and the nation still needs them very much as future leaders, doctors, etc. It is because during my training as a nurse that I treated many such patients and it is that experience that I use to advise them accordingly in order to avoid the associated dangers of the deadly disease.

I am indeed very grateful to GTL to make me what I am because I feel proud to be nurse and to treat patients, I thank all the benefactors who donate generously to help the needy girls and I think our two coordinators the late Sister Immy (may she rest in peace) and the current one Sister Salome for linking us well to GTL to enable us receive all the tuition we need in time. We also promise to help others with the little we shall be having as we have also helped. THANK YOU GTL, THANK YOU OUR DEAR BENEFACTORS AND LONG LIVE GTL!!!

Dianah's Poem

AIDS THE DEADLY DISEASE

We don't know who brought you!
Killing people leaving children and friends suffering.

Oh God hear our prayer and suffering.
Suffering Day and night looking for what to eat
Leaving your loving African child suffering.

Oh the African orphan

When your father and mother died
It is the end of you
Friends, relatives and the community,
They will end up looking at you
The studies and all nice things will end.

Oh my God why can't you hear our cry for your help!
AIDS is the disease that gets you and weakens your body cells
Suffering with it are scratches on your body,
Diarrhea and coughing occur all along.

Prevention of this disease
Leaders, teachers, elders, parents
Let us come together to fight AIDS.
Abstaining is the best method of prevention for the people.
Elders be faithful in your relationships, have one partner.
Visit medical centers to get information on how to prevent this deadly disease.

We can therefore save the young generations of Mother Africa!

Update: Dianah is currently returning to nursing school to further her training.

Resources for FYI

<http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/library/news-2008-03-27.html>
<http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/women/aids/factsheet.htm>
<http://www.avert.org/pepfar.htm>
<http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5i11bn-2vqC9c8vaX9eJEsFWz4ivwD91HGO800>
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/uganda0803/>
<http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=77177>
<http://allafrica.com/stories/200711100030.html>
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6319787.stm>
<http://www.plusnews.org/pnprint.asp?ReportID=6000>
<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/03/21/africa10357.htm>
<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/12/01/global14688.htm>
<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/10/25/uganda11920.htm>
<http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm?aid=2645>
http://hrw.org/reports/2005/uganda0305/1.htm#_Toc98378357
http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/global_co/working_group/4th_meeting_presentations.shtml
<http://www.globalpolicy.org/soecon/inequal/2003/0612girls.htm>
http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/rough/2007/07/uganda_the_cond.html