

OURGANDA



Let's ignite hope.
Let's change things.

Speechless / Not Speechless

Dear Friend,

I am rarely speechless. I was speechless.

Solving the problem of sexual violence against children seemed simple: (1) Find out who had been violated. (2) Identify the offender. (3) Arrest him and hand him over to the courts. Then grab the next case by the scruff of the neck and solve it!



JOINUS, OURGANDA'S CHILD ADVOCATE

- On October 1, OurGanda hired Joinus, an experienced, successful teacher who loves kids and hates to see them hurt.
- Joinus, Esther and Vincent met with government officials and other community leaders and created a Community Action Team (CAT) that springs into action whenever a child has been harmed.
- Joinus went to work immediately. She visited all ten of OurGanda's villages, met with ten people from each village, asked questions and listened.
- After reviewing her pages of notes, we set up a Zoom call with Joinus, Esther, Vincent and Frank. *What did you hear from the 100 people you interviewed? How bad is the problem? Does anyone try to stop it? What do you recommend? How can we help you?*

Here is why I was speechless. This is what we learned:

- Forcible rape of girls happens frequently. Offenders come from three demographics: random men in the village, teenagers, and relatives.
- "Yes, it happens" one village elder reported, "but we keep it quiet."
- When a perpetrator is arrested and convicted in court, he is most likely sentenced to life in prison. People are afraid to be marked in the village as someone who sent a man to prison for life.
- Most parents are afraid to report sexual violence so they readily accept a bribe. Also, most girls are terrified of being shamed and stigmatized so they agree to cover it up.



Vincent addressed me with a story: "Ronny (everyone in Uganda calls me Ronny), you remember the small house we pass when we go to..."

Yes, I have walked by that very hut at least 20 times.

"A young teenager who lives in that house was forcibly raped and became pregnant. I talked with the father and offered to intervene with the police. He begged me not to report it. He explained that the offender paid him a 'dowry' so the matter was settled. The family agreed to move on as if it had not happened."

I was not speechless for long.

"This problem is very dark," I noted with emotion, "but it can be solved. It must be solved. We have to bring this dysfunction out of the darkness into the light. When a child has been violated, no one should pretend it didn't happen. Through whatever means necessary, we will empower children, parents, teachers, pastors, and other village leaders to speak up, to shine a light on each and every violation, to eventually slam the brakes on this horrific indignity that robs children of their innocence."

We started a list of possible solutions. Joinus, Esther, and Vincent will continue that list with their local Ourganda leadership team, with our partner organizations, and with the district Community Action Team. Our children's committee on this side of the ocean will continue to meet regularly and offer our ideas and support.

I can assure you of this: **Six months from now, one year from now, things will be different.** We will protect the children of our villages. With God's help, we will create communities where men, women and children feel safe, healthy and happy.

Please join us on this journey.

- Pray for Joinus and the rest of her team. Pray for every girl and every boy who is vulnerable, and for every adult who is committed to protecting them. Pray, too, for those who hurt others to receive a new heart through a friendship with Jesus.
- Consider a generous gift to support the children's protection program. We need to expand our team that goes into churches and schools and neighborhoods to teach and inspire. A one-time gift goes so far in Uganda, and an ongoing monthly gift will protect hundreds of children over time.

Here is how you can help:

- Online: Scan this QR code or visit ourganda.org/donate
- Phone: Call **360-624-7271**
- Mail: Send a check made payable to Ourganda to **PO Box 874205; Vancouver, WA 98687**



Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Ron Gladden, Ourganda Founder & Director

