



NEWSLETTER — SUMMER 2025

Dear Supporter

The team at Shines never sits still, and the first half of 2025 has been as full of progress as any of the last few years.

In Miirya, Shines School now has all year groups represented for the first time. Boarding houses were constructed and opened this year too. In April, the school was ranked as the third best private school in Masindi, and we are now fundraising to create a fully integrated special educational needs unit within the school.

In Makudui, we continue to make family planning, HIV care and skills training available for young single mothers, so they can earn a living for themselves and their babies.

We are so proud of our friends and colleagues in Shines Uganda and Care For Girls Uganda, who are the engine that keeps Shines moving forward and achieving so much. Their passion, initiative and selfless energy are an inspiration to us all.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the unstinting support of you, our supporters, donors and sponsors. We are proud of you, too—and full of thanks for the difference you are helping us all to make.

When Shines School first opened in 2019, it had just three classrooms, and admitted a combined Baby and Middle class and a Top class in the Nursery Section, along with Primary 1 Class in the main school.

In 2020, we added two classrooms and a hall, and the Primary 1 children progressed to the next class—though Covid soon closed the school for most of the next two years.

Each year a new cohort has joined the school at the bottom, and in 2024 we were able to complete the construction of the classrooms, kitchen and admin block. In 2025 those pioneering Primary 1 children entered Primary 7, the final year of primary education in Uganda.

In 2025 we added boarding accommodation for the older cohorts, and the mainstream school is now complete.



But the work doesn't stop there. Our teachers are all now enrolled in a skills improvement program provided by Redearth Education, an outstanding charity whose founders and current management we are proud to call our friends. Several teachers are also now undertaking a Diploma program at university, improving their skills yet further.

And the teachers' skills have now improved to such an extent that Shines School has been ranked as the third best private school (out of over 35) in the entire Masindi Municipality. An amazing achievement!



In 2025 we hope to raise sufficient funds to build and open an integrated special educational needs unit at Shines School.

Childhood disability is common in Uganda, and few families can afford to support education for a child who may never be able to contribute economically. So most children with special educational needs do not go to school at all. Few schools cater to their needs, and those that do are specialist schools, with no integration in mainstream schools.

Shines now aims to open a unit within the grounds of the existing school, providing dedicated support to pupils with learning disabilities and difficulties. We expect that it will cost £35,000 to build the classroom and an attached toilet and washroom.

Donations can be made here:

<https://justgiving.com/shineschildren-uganda>.

But we suggest you don't pay the JustGiving "tip" - we are happy to pay the small fee JustGiving charges, and the "tip" is usually much larger.

In October 2024 we took 400 pairs of glasses to Masindi for the Shines Medical Camp. The optometrist was able to supply over 180 pairs to patients who attended the camp, but returned to her clinic at Masindi Hospital with the remainder. We are delighted that all of them have now been distributed—so that's 400 people who couldn't see properly, who now can!



In Makudui, near Mbale, we continue to support Care For Girls in their work with a group of teenage mothers who have been turned out by their families, having failed to secure a “dowry” or bride price on becoming pregnant.

We are delighted that four of the group have now completed their training as tailors and have started a small business making and selling clothes.

It is hard for them to earn a living even with this new skill, as prices are very low for hand-made garments, but the Care For Girls project manager visits regularly and is helping them to learn about profit and loss, and the importance of holding onto their capital so they can buy the next batch of materials.

In the meantime, four other members of the group have begun training in hairdressing. In a few months’ time, when they have completed their training, they will be able to join their colleagues in the Care For Girls shop.

Care For Girls also helps the group to access family planning and sexual health services, including treatment for HIV/AIDS for themselves and their babies.



Soon after Care For Girls first began its work in Makudui, one of the young mothers in the group, Eva, age 19, disappeared, leaving four young children aged between 2 and 7. She has not been heard from since.

For a while Eva’s children were cared for by a local woman, but when she was unable to continue they were fostered by an elderly couple in the next village. Jeremiah, Jonah, Joy and Jeila now attend school and have a stable home life.

Another of the young mothers, Mercy, age 15, ended her own life, leaving behind a baby of around a year named Blessing. Care For Girls has also been able to find a foster home for Blessing with the family of a local pastor.

The lives of these young women in Makudui are unimaginably hard. Without any support from their own families, and aged between 12 and 18 with no education or skills, they eke out a living digging in other people’s vegetable gardens all day in exchange for nothing but a single meal. Care For Girls will shortly begin the process of reaching out to their parents and helping them to overcome the sense of “shame” that caused them to reject their daughters when they became pregnant.



THE STORY OF SHINES

One of the most common things people ask us is how Shines began. So we thought we would tell the story here.



Randall, aged 26, starts his 2 year VSO placement in Masindi Teacher Training College

1995

2013

Denis Kiirya, just 20 years old and full of passion and drive, forms Shines Children's Foundation. He and his committed team start work to change the lives of children in the poor villages around Masindi.



Adam undertakes a volunteering project with OFDA, and by chance meets Denis and the Shines Uganda team.

2017

Caroline and Randall go to Uganda on holiday to catch up with old friends and see the sights. In Masindi they are introduced to Denis and the Shines Uganda team, and decide to go home and found a UK charity to support the work. Denis connects them with Adam who becomes a trustee.

2018



2019



The first building of Shines School, housing Nursery and the first year of Primary, opens in February.

2020

The second school building opens and the world immediately goes into Covid lockdown. Ugandan schools will be closed for longer than schools anywhere in the world - 93 weeks - and will not re-open until 2022. During the pandemic, child marriage and teen pregnancy increase hugely. Shines provides remote and outdoor lessons and holds skills workshops for youth.



2023



The first Shines medical camp is held in October. A large donation is received enabling construction to start on the remaining school buildings.

Shines Uganda celebrates 10 years. Shines UK is introduced to Care For Girls, working with single mothers in Mbale District, and Fay joins the trustees.



2024



The school is finished to a magnificent standard, and holds an official opening ceremony in July that is attended by dignitaries, government officials and embassy representatives.

The second Shines medical camp takes place in October and treats over 1500 people.

A children's author from the UK leads a creative writing workshop at Shines School.

2025

Boarding accommodation is constructed at Shines School and the first boarders arrive in February.

Shines UK plans its first volunteer program, hosting volunteers from the UK who will work on education, legal aid, creative story-telling and environment protection.



Please support our ongoing work

In 2026, we are hoping to open a special educational needs unit at Shines School. We are now raising the funds to build a classroom and bathroom to accommodate this unit.

In October 2025, the third medical camp will take place in Miirya, while in July and August 2025 a group of volunteers will contribute their time and skills to the community.

We will continue to support the young mothers in Makudui with family planning, health support and income-generating skills. A number of donors have generously supported the training for one girl, which enables us to offer a route out of total destitution for that young woman and her baby.

In 2025 we will begin a project of planting a tree on Shines School campus for every pupil at the school. Each year, every new joiner will add to this plantation by planting a new tree.

The regular and ongoing support for Shines School that is offered by so many donors in the UK, sponsoring the fees and nutrition of an individual child, is invaluable. **To sponsor a child for just £195 per year or £16.25 per month**—which funds the school fees, uniform costs, shoes, breakfast and lunch for a child at Shines School who would otherwise be unable to afford an education—please get in touch. Sponsors receive regular updates about the child they support, including photos, school reports and a regular copy of our newsletter.

We also offer opportunities to sponsor individual schemes and activities within the communities we support, so if you have a particular interest in sexual and reproductive rights education, micro-finance and entrepreneurship, disability rights, employment skills training, or any of our other work, we would be delighted to discuss possibilities.

You can reach us at

info@shinesuk.org

on our website at: www.shinesuk.org

or via our Facebook page at

<https://www.facebook.com/Shines-Childrens-Foundation-UK-Supporters-327308881431611/>

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