

Dear Sponsor,

Thank you very much for agreeing to continue to sponsor your student for the next stage of his/her academic career. Forgive this lengthy epistle, but based on issues we have had with a few sponsors who have decided half way through a sponsorship that they are no longer interested in their student because he or she is not, in their opinion, doing well enough, we realize that we have done a poor job of communicating with our sponsors and need to make sure before we continue that you trust us to make the right choices for your child.

While we understand that circumstances can arise that make it hard or impossible for sponsors to continue to support a student we do not believe that a decision based on a poor understanding of the culture and schools in Uganda should be one of them.

As you can imagine it leaves the project in a very difficult place. So long as the child has fulfilled the obligations attached to the scholarship, laid out in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which children, parents, and The Kasiisi Project all sign, we are obligated to support them. So we end up scrambling to pay their fees and given our very tight budget this can be a huge problem.

In Uganda we have a very effective, hardworking and very strict, by western standards, scholarship committee, which selects, monitors and guides our students. They choose students based on merit only to avoid any chance of nepotism. They meet with students 3 times a year and discuss issues that might be impacting their performance. Extra tutoring is offered every vacation but if it is clear that the child is simply not working hard enough then sanctions are imposed. The size of the scholarship is reduced and families put pressure on their child to improve. This sanction rarely needs to be imposed more than once. If a student gets expelled from school then they are automatically also expelled from our program.

However our goal is to educate our children so we try the best we can to help them finish.

We send our students to the best schools possible but this means that, coming from poor rural primary schools, they are at a disadvantage compared with classmates who attended private institutions. The result is that their position in class may not be very high. Also Ugandan schools, believing that being too complimentary leads to slacking off, mark very hard. It is often a wonderful surprise when we get their final results! There is none of the grade inflation of US schools – The pass mark is 40%.

In addition, African culture dictates that students have to do what their families wish and while this does not always lead them to what we think is the best career move for them, we have to work with the culture and support them in whatever direction they choose.

Of course for some, all of this is not enough, and we can only predict how a kid is likely to do based on past experience with other scholars, but a mark of the success of our program is that out of 110 scholars only 12% have dropped out. Given the circumstances that many

of our students face – 30% of them are orphans – we think this is remarkable and a testament to the dedication of our scholarship committee.

What we need is from you is for you to trust us to make the right decisions for your student. While circumstances can look grim from the US end, our Ugandan colleagues know what they are doing and we strongly believe that helping a struggling student succeed is not as has been claimed “throwing good money after bad”! Not all our students make it to University but of the 12 students who have graduated from our program 10 have jobs – no mean feat for Uganda where the unemployment levels are extremely high

So what this letter is saying is in that order to budget for your student we must trust you to trust us. And that means we need to know that, without unforeseen disaster intervening, you will support your student for the whole of the next stage of his/her education at whatever the level you have chosen.

If you feel uncomfortable with making this commitment we understand, but must very regretfully decline your sponsorship. If you wish to support the project in some other way we would love you to contribute towards other programs or even make a general donation to the scholarship fund but we need to know, before sending a student off on the next stage of his/her education, that we have the funds to pay for it.

Thank you for your support and understanding.

Elizabeth Ross
Director The Kasiisi Project

Emily Otali
Chair: The Scholarship Committee

Akshita Puram
Director: The Kasiisi Project Scholarship Program